



Viewpoints Special Edition

# The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1979-2009: Evolution of a Pivotal State

*The Middle East Institute  
Washington, DC*





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## ***Viewpoints* Special Edition**

# **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1979-2009: Evolution of a Pivotal State**



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# The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1979-2009:

## Evolution of a Pivotal State

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# Introduction

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Though its national origins date from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the current (third) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is relatively new. Its establishment in 1932 marked the culmination of several decades of successful military and political efforts led by the Kingdom's founder, 'Abd al-'Aziz bin 'Abd al-Rahman Al Saud.

Popular misconceptions of Saudi Arabia abound. They are marked by static, sometimes distorted images of the country and its people: the varied Saudi landscape misrepresented in sharp dichotomous snapshots of oil rigs and vast stretches of empty desert; the diverse Saudi population miscast either as backward camel herders and desert dwellers or portly princes luxuriating in opulent palaces; and the misidentification of Wahhabism and contemporary jihadism, and thus the mischaracterization of Saudis as terrorists or as purveyors of terrorism.

Most people other than Saudis themselves are unaware of — much less able to fathom — the magnitude of the changes that have occurred inside the Kingdom, and the stunning rapidity with which they have occurred. Much of this change has taken place over the past three decades — not all of it the handiwork of Saudis themselves, and by no means all of it positive.

Today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a population of more than 28 million, 82% of whom live in urban areas. The Kingdom dominates the Arabian Peninsula economically, politically, and militarily. The Saudi presence and influence radiates across the region and throughout the world in the form of investment capital, media, foreign aid, the championing of Muslim causes, and the conduct of diplomacy. Saudi Arabia, which possesses about 20% of the world's petroleum reserves, is the largest petroleum exporter and plays a leading role in OPEC.

The breathtaking pace of Saudi Arabia's modernization and ascent on the world stage has come at a cost. It has unleashed social forces that cannot easily be controlled. And it has fuelled fears and grievances that have proved impossible to ignore, yet difficult to manage.

The year 1979 is an important marker. The clutch of events that took place in the wider region during that year — the Iranian Revolution, the signing of the Camp David Treaty, the second "oil shock," the launching of General Zia ul-Haq's Islamization program in Pakistan, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan — profoundly shaped Saudi Arabia's subsequent regional and international role, and fed back into Saudi social and political relations in ways that continue to be felt.

The year was not without momentous events within Saudi Arabia's borders as well. On November 20,

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## Introduction...

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1979, Juhayman Sayf al-‘Utaybi and several hundred armed Salafists — including Saudis, Egyptians, Kuwaitis, Yemenis, and Iraqis — seized the al-Masjid al-Haram (Grand Mosque) in Mecca, the holiest site in Islam, as thousands of worshippers were gathering for the dawn prayer. The same month, Shi‘ite protests erupted in the oil-rich eastern region of the country. The disturbing simultaneity of these challenges to the legitimacy of the Saudi system of rule led, among other things, to the restructuring of relations between the political leadership and the ‘*ulama*’ and to the securitization of the state.

Taken together, these events both inside and outside the Kingdom were harbingers of things to come — of an economy still heavily dependent on oil rents; a social contract anchored in lavish subsidies and welfare services that are increasingly difficult to sustain; deeply conservative religio-cultural mores that cannot be insulated from the forces of globalization; and the vexing issues of managing domestic political dissent while maintaining a “special relationship” with the United States in the face of a diffuse radical Salafist movement worldwide and the expansion of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s regional power and influence.

This collection of 21 essays, the fifth of six special editions of MEI *Viewpoints* commemorating the momentous events of 1979, seeks to shed light on some of the important developments in Saudi Arabia’s domestic and external affairs since then.



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# I. Media, Culture, and Society

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# The Rise of a Media Kingdom

*Noha Mellor*

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In 1965, public riots led by the austere Wahhabists broke out in Saudi Arabia in protest of the introduction of television in the land that serves as the guardian of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina. No one then could ever imagine that after only four decades, Saudi media moguls and TV presenters would manage to control the Arab media scene and become some of the most influential media personalities in the region. This essay reviews some of the important stages in the development of the Saudi media and its rise from local ventures into a powerful media kingdom that controls most of the Arab TV production catering to Arabs inside and outside the Middle East.



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## *DEFENDING ISLAM*

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Saudi rulers saw in mass communications a powerful means to propagate Islamic preaching and to counterbalance the socialist Nasserist attack on the Arab monarchies. This prompted the Saudi state to launch its Voice of Islam radio broadcast as a counterbalance to the Egyptian Voice of Arabs broadcast. In 1965, the Saudi government launched two TV stations from Jeddah and Riyadh. Although the second channel was intended to target educated Saudi elites fluent in English and French as well as expatriates working inside the Kingdom, it has functioned as a bridge that connects the expatriate community to Islamic preaching. The media policy of the kingdom at this time also reflected this dedication to the spread of Islamic messages. Thus, the Higher Committee of Information, established in 1977, had as its main responsibility the drafting of formal information policies and guidelines that usually emphasized the function of the media in spreading Islamic values and practices. The Saudi ambition to use mass media to propagate Islamic values found a new means of communication in satellite transmission. So, in 1985, ArabSat was launched; and in the same year, the Saudi government broadcast, for the first time, the rites of Hajj. In 1990, the Saudi Kingdom launched its first satellite channels, broadcasting more than 100 hours a week, by renting three satellite channels on ArabSat. The aim was to consolidate an Islamic identity, hence the abundance of religious programs. Another aim was to reflect the Kingdom's plan to modernize the country and highlight construction projects underway there.

## *A GLOBAL MEDIA KINGDOM*

In the same way that poets in the pre-Islamic era were used as media channels to enhance their tribe's reputation, each Saudi royal family member has established his own

media channel to reflect his image (e.g., liberal, moderate, and so on). In the print press, London in particular has been the headquarters for a number of the so-called pan-Arab émigré newspapers. Among these publications is *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, founded by two Saudi brothers, Hesham and Mohamed Hafez, who fled state regulations at home and bought the British Central Press Photo in London. From there they issued *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, attempting to mirror the success of the *International Herald Tribune* as an international newspaper. Other Saudi moguls followed suit, beginning with the ARA Group, which launched MBC channels in London in 1991. Two years later, Dallah al-Baraka launched ART channels. In 1994, the Al Mawared Company launched Orbit. Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, a nephew of the Saudi King, has become known in world media through his business ventures, particularly his buyout of shares in several media corporations, including News Corporation, Time Warner, LBC, and various Arabic newspapers. In 2003, he launched his Rotana channels, beginning with Rotana Music, followed by Rotana Clip with SMS service for young viewers, and Rotana Classic and Rotana Gulf for Gulf music.

#### THE KINGDOM'S NEW LOOK

As the entertainment channels and production companies are mostly owned by Gulf business tycoons, there is now an openly announced strategy of promoting Gulf dialects. After the dominance of the Egyptian dialect in the cultural field for so many decades, now Arab singers, particularly Lebanese stars, record songs in Gulf dialects to gain access to the lucrative Saudi market. Saudi TV and radio presenters also have increased in number in the satellite channels; one of them is Al-Arabiya's presenter, Turki Al-Dakhil, who *Rotana* magazine readers voted the most popular Arab male presenter; *Good News TV* magazine ranked him among the 50 most influential TV figures in the Arab world. Other names include Ali Al Aliyani, who made his fame as a presenter of a youth show on LBC channel, and other Saudi talents such as Mona Seraj. New radio stations such as MBC FM also introduced new young Saudi women presenters such as Amal al-Harbi and Khadija al-Waal.

Even Saudi film production has revived recently, following the move of Saudi Television empires such as Rotana and ART to cinematic production. This comes after more than two decades of suppression by conservative Islamist groups who prohibited film screenings to Saudi citizens. In 2005, the Kingdom saw the opening of the first movie theatre in Riyadh, followed by the release of a couple of Saudi films with Saudi actors. The first Saudi production was *Zelal Assamt* (2006), followed by the film *Keif al Hal*. The conservative Kingdom launched the first Saudi Film Festival in 2006, entitled "Jeddah Visual Productions." A year later, the Saudi Ministry of Culture kicked off a contest encouraging Saudi youths to enter the film field and form their own film society.

In 2008, Rotana produced the second feature film, *Menahi*, which tells the story of a young Saudi man of Bedouin ori-

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gin who travels to Dubai and faces a series of funny situations due to the difference of lifestyle. The film sums up the paradoxical situation of Saudi media professionals at the moment: torn between the conservative lifestyle inside the Kingdom and the liberal environment of the Saudi-financed transnational media outside the Kingdom. The most recent example was the Saudi Ministry of Information's decree imposing the national Aba'ya dress and full-head coverage on all Saudi female presenters, which has driven many Saudi women media talents to flee to Dubai and Beirut — freeing themselves from the state restrictions at home and the zealots' claim of being the only guardians of virtue.

Today, most of the so-called pan-Arab media outlets, whether satellite channels or newspapers, are in Saudi hands. This has raised concerns that journalists might practice self-censorship in order to avoid conflicts with the Saudi ruling family that could jeopardize lucrative advertising contracts with Saudi corporations.

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# Diwaniyyas, Intellectual Salons, and the Limits of Civil Society

Toby Matthiesen

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In recent years, a number of discussion forums and intellectual salons have gained popularity among Saudi intellectuals. These have been most popular in urban centers, such as Riyadh and Jeddah, as well as among the Shi'ites in the Eastern Province. In some cases, these gatherings act as a substitute for political parties, which are still banned in Saudi Arabia. One of the reasons for the popularity of these forums is the absence of other cultural activities. Yet, for many, the preferred meeting ground is still the *diwan* in a private home. Although most of these meetings are for men only, women have begun to organize their own forums. The *diwan* is a civil society structure that respects local traditions of consultation and takes place in a social space that is distinctive to the Gulf countries. The *diwaniyyas* of Saudi Arabia, which are flourishing, nonetheless operate within a political environment that is narrowly circumscribed.

## JEDDAH AND RIYADH

One of the most famous *diwaniyyas* in Jeddah is held weekly at the house of Muhammad Sa'id Tayyib. Tayyib is a liberal intellectual and businessman who spent several years in prison for his political activities. In 2003, he was one of the key figures in an alliance of liberals and Islamists in Saudi Arabia that called for gradual social and political reforms.<sup>1</sup> In his spacious living room, he presides over a *diwaniyya* of mostly other liberals from Jeddah. The group of regular attendees consists of merchants, academics, diplomats, politicians, and journalists. His *diwaniyya* has been going on for decades, although he had been ordered to close it temporarily. This *diwaniyya* is peculiar because it is both a space for people associated with the establishment and for more oppositional figures.

During a recent trip to Saudi Arabia, I was invited to join the discussions for a night. Initially, one would converse with one's neighbour until at some point in the evening, Muhammad Sa'id Tayyib or one of his close friends would bring up several topics for the discussion. Apart from poetry, literature, and the economy, social and political matters are on the top of the agenda. During my experience, a visiting member of the Majlis al-Shura was being questioned by different people on topics ranging from waste disposal to freedom of speech and political prisoners. Thereafter, a young journalist attacked the editor of a major Saudi newspaper directly for not reporting a hunger strike of Saudi



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1. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New Islamo-liberal Reformist Trend," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2004), pp. 345-365, 355f.



liberals in response to the arrest of Matrouk al-Faleh, a liberal Professor.<sup>2</sup>

Similar discussion forums exist in Riyadh, such as the *diwaniyya* “Rashid al-Mubarak” and the “Diwan al-Jasser.” Here, people sometimes deliver prepared speeches. In the capital, many more of these meetings exist, including those by intellectuals from other regions of the country who have moved to Riyadh.

#### THE EASTERN PROVINCE

Probably the most active region in Saudi Arabia in terms of cultural forums and gatherings is the Eastern Province. Here, several Sunni businessmen organize *diwaniyyas*, yet it is amongst the Shi‘ite inhabitants of Qatif, Dammam, and al-Ahsa that these gatherings have gained wide popularity in the last couple of years. These large *diwaniyyas* with scheduled lecture series have been named *muntada* (forum). They are distinct from the *diwaniyyas* in other areas of Saudi Arabia or the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states because they are not primarily a social gathering in private places to exchange news and meet friends.

One of the first forums was set up in 2000 by Jaafar al-Shayib, a former leader of the main Shi‘a opposition movement, the Reform Movement (*Islahiyya*). The salon, which is held every Tuesday and is therefore called *muntada al-thulatha* (Tuesday Forum), assembles intellectuals from different political persuasions, although al-Shayib’s political allies are predominant. The salon has become famous for not only discussing purely intellectual topics but also topics such as social and political reform and the overcoming of sectarianism. In addition, al-Shayeb invites many intellectuals from other regions of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries to deliver speeches.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, these speeches have been posted online on the website of the forum, where they gained a wide readership.<sup>4</sup>

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Najib al-Khunaizi, a secular intellectual and political activist, founded another famous monthly cultural salon, the Qatif Cultural *Diwaniyya* (*diwaniyya al-multaqa al-thaqafi fi al-qatif*), in 2004. On the homepage of the *diwaniyya*, the salon is described as “a Saudi civil society organization” (*ihda al-muassasat al-mujtama al-madani al-saudi*) that aims to foster understanding of dialogue and freedom of thought and speech.<sup>5</sup> It hosts some well-known intellectuals from the region, and is a meeting place for the liberals from the region. It is also one of the few gatherings that women are allowed to attend.<sup>6</sup>

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2. Interview with Muhammad Sa‘id Tayyib, Jeddah, November 1, 2008.

3. F.A. Ibrahim, *The Shi‘is of Saudi Arabia* (London, 2006) 216f.

4. See <http://www.thulatha.com>.

5. See <http://www.multaka.net>.

6. Interview with Najib al-Khunaizi, Qatif, November 2008.

Several other salons have opened in Qatif and the surrounding villages. In fact, almost all of the larger Shi'ite villages and towns such as Sayhat, Awamiyya or Safwa now have their own forums. Both Sunnis and Shi'ites in al-Ahsa started to hold similar meetings in the last few years. Moreover, several forums for females have been organized by Shi'ite women. Unlike their male counterparts, they are not allowed to post photos and videos of their meetings on the internet and therefore only reach a limited audience. However, they do invite speakers and discuss cultural and religious topics, although they are not allowed to talk about political matters. One of the organizers of such an event reported that after holding a session on women's rights in 2006, all the forums in al-Ahsa — both male and female — were closed down by the authorities.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, some of them have been allowed to reopen, such as the one organized by the Bu Khamsin, the prominent Shi'ite clerical and business family.<sup>8</sup> The most popular Sunni salon in al-Ahsa is the one by Shaykh Ahmad al-Mubarak.

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**The widespread emergence of these forums is striking and suggests that a new culture of dialogue and intellectual debate is emerging in Saudi Arabia.**

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A Shi'ite cultural journal describes these cultural forums as being “amongst the most important cultural platforms in Saudi Arabia, because they are a true mirror of the social street in the wake of the weakness — or absence — of other platforms.”<sup>9</sup> The widespread emergence of these forums is striking and suggests that a new culture of dialogue and intellectual debate is emerging in Saudi Arabia, something which is also proven by the opinion pages in Saudi newspapers. Yet, these activities are often limited to what they are — speech — and to a narrow social base. Even Muhammad Sa'id Tayyib himself is aware of the limited impact of this salon: “In the night after the *diwaniyya* each one of the attendees goes home, puts his head on the pillow and in the morning he wakes up, goes about his life as before and forgets about everything until he comes back next week.”<sup>10</sup>

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7. Interview with organizers of a cultural forum in al-Ahsa, November 2008.

8. The homepage of the forum is <http://www.bukhamsen.net>.

9. Yusuf Ahmad al-Hasan, *Ahammiyya al-muntadiyyat al-thaqafiyya fi al-mamlaka*, in *al-Waha*, No. 43, p. 146.

10. Interview with Muhammad Sa'id Tayyib, Jeddah, November 1, 2008.

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# A Rentier Social Contract: The Saudi Political Economy since 1979

*Steffen Hertog*

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The year 1979 was the last year of the pivotal decade in which the Saudi economy took its modern shape; no other decade before or since has seen more change. The patterns of oil-driven politics that emerged at the time still define the Kingdom's political landscape today — even if some of the players in the political game have subtly shifted their roles.

Oil income increased 25 times from 1970 to 1979. The ambitions of the Saudi state, the all-dominant agent of change during the boom, grew in lockstep. Under the technocratic leadership of Crown Prince Fahd, the previously small and poor Saudi government expanded rapidly and soon appeared to be everywhere. By 1979, when oil prices were on the way to their second peak after 1974, oil sector government together accounted for 65% of Saudi economic activity and government drove 63% of total investment in physical assets — a rate otherwise only reached in socialist economies.

State expenditure continued to grow at a rapid pace into the 1980s, and the bureaucracy rolled out public services at a record pace: Electricity generation increased from two billion kilowatt hours per year in 1969 to 44 billion in 1984. The supply of desalinated water grew from practically nil to 350 million gallons per day over the same period. The total length of paved roads quadrupled.

Soon the state's reach extended to virtually all Saudis, usually to their delight. Heavily subsidized public utilities, state employment, and free education and healthcare guaranteed the comforts of middle class life for increasing numbers of nationals in a country where less than a generation ago life for many had been a daily fight for survival.

The paternal-distributional state not only brought material comfort, but also had a profound effect on political life. It is no coincidence that the few oppositional stirrings the Kingdom had witnessed in the 1960s largely stopped in the 1970s. The omnipresent state used its resources to buy off potential opponents and envelop society in ever-expanding networks of formal and informal patronage. Patronage was not new to Saudi politics, but never before had it reached all strata of society. By 1979, the rentier social contract, in the making since the 1940s, had come to define national politics.

Sectors of society that used to drive Saudi Arabia's modest development became appendices of the state. The Saudi merchant classes, which had once funded the country's



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first schools and power generators, and bankrolled the ruling family, were reduced to the role of rent-seekers or, at best, service providers for the state. Although the nimbler among them amassed untold riches, they did so as intermediaries, contract brokers, and rent-seekers in the orbit of the state, and often by the grace of the princes at the center of it.

The merchants were looked upon benevolently, but played at best an auxiliary role in the Saudi government's outsize development plans. The largest industrial and infrastructure projects in the 1970s were all controlled by the government itself, in the face of a business sector that lacked expertise, managerial structures, and the capacity for long-term planning. While remaining staunchly capitalist, the Saudi economic system was utterly dominated by the state — an oddity in the annals of international development.

A closer look at Saudi economic development in the last decade shows that the 1970s boom arguably constituted an exception in Saudi history itself. In 2009, after six years of the new oil boom, the Saudi economy is in many ways a more ordinary creature than it was 30 years ago. Although the state remains oil-financed and business cycles are broadly linked to oil prices, the private sector plays a much more substantial role in development.

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Having experienced 15 years of stagnation after the oil price crash of the mid-1980s, the Saudi government has used its post-2000 oil riches much more cautiously, saving a considerable portion of its additional oil income. While its coffers had been depleted in the period to 2000, and its bureaucracy stagnated, Saudi business had used the lean years for consolidation and the gradual accumulation of resources, which, different from the government, it was not forced to spend but could continuously reinvest. While some business groups went under with the oil bust, others gradually diversified and started serving private, rather than state, demand.

The new boom has given renewed importance to government investment — but different from last time, private capital formation remains one and a half times larger than that of government. Private business, moreover, is increasingly involved in providing education, health care, and infrastructure through public-private partnerships in water, power, and transport facilities. Despite record oil prices, government has not rescinded its commitment, first articulated in the austere 1990s, to delegating increasing responsibility to national business. The private sector continues its return into fields it used to dominate in the pre-oil era. At the same time, large Saudi groups have emerged as leading cross-border investors in the Arab world and beyond, and are voicing their policy interests in Saudi Arabia in an increasingly organized fashion.

Does this mean the end of the rentier social contract? By itself, no: For all the strides of business, the economic situation of the average Saudi remains quite similar to that in 1979. State employment of nationals remains high — by some estimate twice as high as private employment — public services remain subsidized, and networks of princely patronage

are still an essential feature of daily life. The government has backpedalled repeatedly on attempts to curb subsidies, and has used the recent boom to increase social security payments and public wages.

Organized politics remains largely absent in Saudi Arabia, a country without a national working class, and with a middle class that is largely state-dependent. While business has evolved, society at large remains locked in place. And to be sure, the relative increases in private sector autonomy have not tempted any of the big Saudi capitalists to organize politically. State-business negotiations remain strictly focused on business issues.

While the Saudi economy in a strict sense has changed a good deal, the Kingdom's *political* economy remains the same in 2009 as it was in 1979. Neither government nor business seems to have much reason to complain about it.



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# The Freedoms Saudi Women Really Want

Natana J. DeLong-Bas

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Ask the average Westerner about the status of women in Saudi Arabia and one is likely to hear about veiling, strict gender segregation, and the ban on driving. Ask the average Saudi woman about her top priorities and one is likely to hear about expanded job opportunities and training for women, reforms in the practice of family law, and protection from domestic violence and child abuse. For Saudi women, reforming cultural and societal attitudes and stigmas against public discussion of social realities in order to promote genuine and lasting long-term change has proven to be more important than surface issues like dress and the right to drive.

In the immediate aftermath of the cataclysmic events of 1979, Saudi Arabia experienced a wave of religious conservatism that frequently targeted women as the culture bearers, curtailing their freedom of movement and access to public space. Since the first Gulf War of 1990-91, however, Saudi women have increasingly called for a return to the relative freedoms and progress of the King Faysal era (1964-1975), in which women were encouraged to seek an education and play a more prominent role in society. Over the past decade, the media has helped to generate public awareness, and discussion of and support for reform that is responsive to lived reality, rather than strict adherence to the legalities.

## EMPLOYMENT

Women's right to engage in commercial and business transactions always has been part of the Islamic tradition because the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, Khadija, was a businesswoman. Saudi women use Khadija's example to ground their requests for increased job opportunities and training programs within the Islamic tradition. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry in various Saudi cities have been pivotal in providing support and opportunities for women seeking to operate their own businesses, receive training, and find jobs. In addition, several Saudi women have been elected to the Boards of Directors of the Chambers, beginning in Jeddah, giving women the opportunity to both participate in and contest elections. It is hoped that this practical experience in a field that is considered to be Islamically legitimate could transfer into other areas in the future.

Although opposition to women's education and employment existed in the past, today an educated and employed daughter is generally considered a source of family pride and honor, as well as a prize potential bride. A job with a steady income represents not only the



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opportunity for personal achievement and satisfaction, but also security because, without an independent source of income, a woman is placed in a permanent position of financial vulnerability and dependence on her father, brothers, or husband.

In theory, Islamic law requires the husband/father, as the male guardian, to provide for the material needs of the family, while any income earned by the wife/mother is her own. Economic realities today, however, often render a wife's, and sometimes even a daughter's, income critical to the household budget. Rising social preference has been expressed for brides with jobs and incomes, despite the remaining cultural expectation for marriage and motherhood as a woman's primary role. In some cases, daughters have filed lawsuits against fathers who have either refused to allow them to marry in order to retain control over their income or who have insisted that he continue to receive their income after marriage. Some judges have intervened to grant daughters permission to marry.

In the past, women were limited to working in fields deemed "suitable" for their "nature," such as medicine, charity work, and education. However, particularly since King 'Abdullah's succession in 2005, other fields traditionally reserved for men, such as engineering, have been opened to women. An industrial city for women has been established outside of Jeddah to encourage women to invest and work in manufacturing, all while helping to diversify the Saudi economy. "Saudization" of certain jobs for women also has been legislated and attempted with mixed success, as in the case of requiring female salespersons for lingerie and training Saudi women as housemaids. In these cases, the jobs already exist. The challenge lies in finding Saudi women who are trained and willing to do them, as well as in creating a social and cultural environment that accepts women working in these jobs. Given the presence of more than 1.5 million foreign female domestic servants in Saudi Arabia, some believe that Saudization of the domestic servant industry is critical to reducing foreign remittances, dependence on foreign labor, and resolving the high rates of unemployment among Saudi women. However, major challenges remain, including overcoming social stigmas against blue collar work, maintaining gender segregation, and resolving transportation issues, such as by providing private company transportation or developing a national public transportation system. At present, working women remain dependent on either male family members or a hired driver to get them to work and back. In addition, like their Western counterparts, Saudi women struggle with the balance between childcare, caring for elderly parents and in-laws, and other family and home responsibilities versus job requirements.

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## *FAMILY LAW*

Saudi society remains a religiously and socially conservative society in which the family is the central unit. Islamic law emphasizes the integrity of the family unit through regulations on marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Under Islamic law, marriage is a contract that is negotiated and agreed upon by the groom and the bride's legal guardian, typically her father. Although the bride's consent is required, such consent may be silent. In the case of a minor,

the guardian's consent renders the marriage valid, while the bride must wait until she reaches her majority to object. In theory, the guardian is expected to have his ward's best interests at heart. In practice, this is not always the case.

In recent years, the media has given significant coverage to cases involving either very young brides (as young as eight years old) or wide age disparities between the spouses (the most extreme case being a ten-year-old girl who was married to an 80-year-old man) in order to bring the issue to public attention and to call for adherence to international treaties on human rights, particularly children's rights (defined as those under the age of 18), to which the Kingdom is a signatory. Some, including members of the Majlis al-Shura and Saudi human rights activists, are calling for a minimum legal age for marriage. Those who resist such calls do so under the cloak of "remaining faithful to Islamic principles" and to *Shari'a*, citing the example of the Prophet's consummation of his marriage to Aisha when she was nine years old, which they believe makes the legality of the marriage clear, regardless of the potential negative impact on the girl. In response to concerns, the Ministry of Health appointed a special committee to investigate marriages of underage girls. The committee concluded that these girls experience deep health, psychological, and social harms, suggesting that the practice should be banned to prevent harm to the brides. However, the study has not yet had an impact on the legal system. In some cases, mothers have gone to court to try to have such marriages annulled. Not all have been successful, although some have been able to obtain court assistance in procuring divorces for their daughters.

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**Circumstances such as drug and alcohol use and abuse by the father, child abuse, and even the presence of satellite television in the father's home have successfully been used in court as grounds for granting custody to the mother.**

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Under Islamic law, a husband can divorce his wife for any or no reason. Because the husband's financial obligation toward his ex-wife extends only through her waiting period following divorce (about three months) or while she is pregnant or breastfeeding, without regard to the length of the marriage or the wife's contributions to it or his career, divorce means not only loss of the woman's financial provider, but also loss of access to the marital home. Divorced women are either returned to their families or are left to fend for themselves — a difficult task without a male guardian. In such cases, having a job can mean the difference between poverty or dependence and independent survival.

In the event of divorce, the father automatically gains custody of boys over the age of five and girls over the age of seven. The automatic legal assignment of custody to the father has been challenged in many ways in recent years. Circumstances such as drug and alcohol use and abuse by the father, child abuse, and even the presence of satellite television in the father's home have successfully been used in court as grounds for granting custody to the mother. Although fathers attempting to retain custody appeal to Islamic law, mothers seeking to gain custody do so as well, noting both religious and social expectations that a woman's most important objective is to be a good mother and that Islamic law at its heart is designed to protect women and children.

Islamic inheritance law is very specific so that inheritance disputes should not exist. Nevertheless, in practice, women are often pressured by male family members to relinquish their inheritance claims in favor of their brothers, ostensibly

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because males, as the theoretical providers, have greater need for it. Some women successfully seek redress in the courts, but some are essentially held hostage by their families until they agree to relinquish their claims. In many cases, the courts have proven reluctant to interfere in what are considered to be “private” family matters, despite the clear regulations for inheritance outlined in the Qur’an.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Over the past decade, the Saudi media has begun comprehensive reporting of cases of domestic violence and spousal and child abuse, reflecting not only a greater openness of the press in discussing what previously were considered to be private family matters, but also a greater willingness within Saudi society to recognize that there are problems that need to be acknowledged and addressed. It remains unclear whether the apparent proliferation of stories is due to greater willingness to report such cases or to a potential rise in such incidents, as there is no past database for comparison.

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**Although much progress has been made in terms of public awareness of issues critical to the safety, wellbeing, and advancement of Saudi women, genuine reform remains a work in progress.**

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Media willingness to seriously engage the issue began with the 2004 case of television personality Rania al-Baz, who was disfigured by a severe beating inflicted by her husband. Images of al-Baz’s beaten face on television sparked national debates about the realities of spouse abuse, shifting the issue from behind closed doors to the public realm. Similarly, the case of nine-year-old Ghosun, who was abused and beaten to death by her father and stepmother, opened the door to public awareness and debate about child abuse, how to recognize it, and how to prevent it.

At the official institutional level, King ‘Abdullah founded the National Family Safety Program in November 2005 to create public awareness of and to prevent domestic and child abuse, the first step in comprehensively addressing the problem. Several shelters for victims have been established. The National Human Rights Association continues to work with authorities on a law to criminalize violence against women and children. Much work remains to be done, particularly in terms of coordination between official institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals, and the police), as well as in prevention and information gathering. Work also remains to be done with respect to automatically granting custody to the non-abusive parent (typically the mother) in cases of divorced parents.. However, public outrage over domestic and child abuse — whether physical, psychological, or sexual — has kept the issue in the forefront, often resulting in harsh penalties, including death, for the perpetrators.

#### CONCLUSION

Although much progress has been made in terms of public awareness of issues critical to the safety, wellbeing, and advancement of Saudi women, genuine reform remains a work in progress. What is encouraging is to see how much progress has been made both officially and at the level of public opinion in generating the collective will for change as a long-term goal.

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# Obstacles to Equality for Saudi Women

*Eleanor Abdella Doumato*

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It was in the summer of 1979 that Islam in Saudi Arabia became all about women. At the urging of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz bin Baz, then chair of the Department of Religious Guidance, Legal Rulings, and Propagation of the Faith, Interior Minister Prince Nayf sent a letter to government offices asking for cooperation in curbing practices offensive to Islamic principles. At the top of the list of condemnable behaviors were unsuitably dressed foreign women shopping or eating out in public. Lower down were complaints about wearing crosses, foreign names on shops that played Western music, and dog food displayed on grocery store shelves, while at the bottom was the problem of Muslims loitering outside mosques when they ought to be praying.<sup>1</sup>

Resistance to the overwhelming presence of foreigners, especially foreign women, was already well documented months before Juhayman’s November 1979 assault at the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The director of the Jeddah branch of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, for example, addressed a polite message for distribution among foreign companies, asking “our brothers in humanity residing in this country” to observe that “ladies should not expose their legs or arms or bosom or hair and refrain from wearing clothes that are too thin or tight,” men must not wear shorts, and both must avoid public displays of affection.<sup>2</sup>

Taking aim at the behavior of outsiders was explicitly intended by leaders within the religious establishment to protect society from the slippery slope “of blind imitation,” imitating, in particular, the habits of Western women.<sup>3</sup> Their fear of contamination must have struck a cord with society at large, because in the aftermath of the mosque assault, Saudi society turned inward. Saudi women who had never before covered their faces began proudly wearing the *niqab*, and the era of black gloves, thick stockings, no-nonsense *abayas*, and women’s prayer circles was launched. Saudi women removed themselves from what was then the center of Riyadh social life for foreigners, the International Women’s Club, and women were forcefully banned from hotel swimming pools and



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1. “Western Customs as Target: City Clean-up action expected,” *Arab News*, July 2, 1979. The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice subsequently published a pamphlet on proper behavior in the Kingdom, translated into English, French, Urdu and Indonesian, that emphasized the revealing clothing of foreign women which “would be a temptation.” “Revealing Dresses Prohibited,” *Arab News*, August 2, 1979.

2. Haiat al-Amr bil Maruf, “Guidelines to our Brothers in Humanity about Proper Dress and Behavior in Saudi Arabia,” Circular # 1039, July 25, 1979.

3. Abdallah ibn Muhammad Al-Dubaykhi, General Supervisor, Eastern Branch, Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Circular #178/6T/1229/1, September 13, 1982.



disappeared as television news announcers. Beauty salons were closed, and eventually, all the international schools were compelled to refuse admission to Muslim children.

As the wagons circled around Saudi culture, separation of the sexes and control of women by their guardians blossomed over the next several years into key tangible indicators of what it means to be Muslim, and the Saudi political leadership got behind the task of enforcement. King Fahd, responding to complaints about applications for women to work in offices, sent out a widely-published circular reminding Saudi and foreign businesses that no women would be allowed to work in any establishment, public or private, where they may come in contact with men. At the same time, a list of instructions for keeping men and women separated from each other in the recreational facilities of housing compounds was affixed to passports of visa-seekers at Saudi Embassies and Consulates. By 1983 the Saudi-style *abaya*, which until then had neither been worn by foreign women, nor expected of them, became *de rigueur* amongst the newest crop of Western wives and Filipino domestic helpers entering the Kingdom.

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**Thirty years later, with minor exceptions, regulations affecting women that hardened during the post-Juhayman era are still in place, but they apply to a less-compliant female population whose experience is far different from their mothers' and grandmothers.'**

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For the regime, pandering to conservative xenophobia was not merely the path of least resistance, but the only course of action that made sense. Among even the most liberal of Saudis, the dislocations brought by development were a source of discomfort, at best, while the Arabian Peninsula had caught the winds of resurgent Muslim identity that were sweeping across the entire region in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Besides, the Saudis had already set out to claim leadership of world-wide Islam, but standing as they did Wahhabism, which was hostile to the veneration of saints, pilgrimage processions, non-Muslims, Shi'a, and Muslim minorities in general, and having shown themselves incapable of protecting the Muslim Holy Places, getting their own religious house in order became an imperative. And so the Saudis tried to seal the connection between themselves as rulers and adherence to a "one true Islam," first through their new mass education system, which placed religious education as the most important subject in the curriculum, and second, by expanding their bureaucracy of religious functionaries empowered to teach, issue religious rulings, control girls' education, impose legal judgments, and force compliance in personal behaviors.

Thirty years later, with minor exceptions, regulations affecting women that hardened during the post-Juhayman era are still in place, but they apply to a less-compliant female population whose experience is far different from their mothers' and grandmothers.' Today women are educated to a level equal and arguably better than their male counterparts. Fifty-eight percent of all higher education students are women, if teachers' colleges are included, 79% of PhDs granted in the Kingdom have been awarded to women, and 40% of all physicians with Saudi nationality are women. Yet, women cannot compete on a level playing field with men when it comes to jobs. Though women of accomplishment can be found in every field of endeavor, including the sciences and most recently law, Saudi Arabia has the lowest percentage of women in the workforce anywhere in the world, and 84% of women who are employed work in the country's bloated, sex-segregated education system.

Despite their education — and sometimes even economic independence — women are legally treated as minors. Women are still not allowed to drive, though King ‘Abdullah once offered words of assurance that they should be. Nor are they allowed to travel internationally, keep a job, obtain medical services, go to court, or marry without their guardians’ permission. They are not included as voters in municipal elections. No legal mechanisms are in place to protect women from domestic violence perpetrated by a guardian, although an independent, licensed human rights society is addressing the problem. In 2008 women were granted access to an individual state-issued ID card without a guardian’s permission, but as yet the card has had limited purchase. Public space and public celebrations belong to men; women’s attendance is viewed as incidental, and their admission confined to discrete pre-set hours. Uncodified Islamic family law, whimsically adjudicated, rules the fate of women in divorce, inheritance and custody cases. When the rights of women in all of the GCC countries are compared, the largest and wealthiest country comes up dead last.

How can this paradox be explained? There are two separate, but interrelated answers. The first is the successful propagation of the Saudi, post-development, women-centered version of Islam and the lack of freedom to talk about it. Organizations must be licensed by the government, and very few advocacy groups are permitted, while those in the media practice self-censorship or are censored. The threat of arrest silences liberal reformers who would be natural advocates for women’s interests. At the same time, the Kingdom’s political culture, tied as it is to the legitimacy of the regime, demands genuflection in the direction of Islam as a religion with something to say about every aspect of life, so that one must profess religious values in the abstract before one can address the laws and regulatory systems that claim to reflect those values. The reformer cannot say that a woman must not be denied medical care absent her guardian’s approval because she could die. The reformer has to first agree that men have the prerogative to control their wives (or protect them, depending on one’s point of view) and only then can he argue against the logical extension of this prerogative *ad absurdum*: a hospital regulation denying emergency surgery to a wife whose husband is unavailable to consent to her treatment. In other words, the reformer has to undermine his own argument before he can make it.

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**As long as sex-segregation remains a cornerstone of the Saudis’ interpretation of Islam, the options open to women are confined largely to the public sector, and primarily to education and health care.**

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The second reason is the impact of sex-segregation on women’s earning capacity. Unemployment is a perpetual problem in Saudi Arabia, for men as well as for women, even as an army of foreign workers increases in number from year to year. As long as sex-segregation remains a cornerstone of the Saudis’ interpretation of Islam, the options open to women are confined largely to the public sector, and primarily to education and health care. The Saudis continue to expand the public sector, but with 121,000 women graduating from secondary schools and 44,000 from colleges and universities every year, there is no possibility that enough job options can be created. As for the private sector, 86.7% of jobs are filled by foreigners, and with good reason: salaries are lower for foreigners than for Saudis, and foreigners are not entitled to the generous benefits available to Saudis, such as long, paid maternity leave and time-outs during the work day for nursing. With the rising political influence of the merchant class, who are no longer as dependent on government contracts, the rulers are unable to put policies in place that might undermine private sector profits in the name of full

employment. And, when it comes to women, why would they want to? The failure of job-creation for women, shelved under the category of sacrifices nobly paid in the service of religious values, serves the regime's legitimacy interests as well as the economic interests of the private sector.

The obstacles to equality women face today are not the product of the events of 1979, although these events added urgency to the institutionalization of Islam by the state. Islam became centered on women during that period for the same reasons women were being hoisted on the flag of culture all over the Muslim world, but what sets Saudi Arabia apart from all the other Gulf countries today is that the Saudi rulers still need women to define who they are, and they just can't let go.

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## II. Religion, Politics, and the State

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# Tawhid or Jihad: What Wahhabism Is and Is Not

David E. Long

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Wahhabism was first introduced in the central Arabian region of Najd in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (c. 1703-c. 1792). Since then, it has been one of the most maligned of any religious reform movement in modern history. That in itself is not so extraordinary. Wahhabism is essentially a puritanical, fundamentalist Islamic reform movement calling for renewal of the faith as originally laid out in the Qur’an and the Sunna, the inspired traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and his early converts. Reform movements advocating major doctrinal changes are always likely to be threatening to those who resist any change of the existing *status quo*.



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In addition, over the years Wahhabism has acquired a political dimension that has been threatening to a broad spectrum of people. In order to understand what Wahhabism is and is not, therefore, one must look both at what it actually advocates as a religious reform movement and what political implications have evolved since its founding.

## WAHHABISM AS A RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENT

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab was a scholar of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence — the most conservative of the Sunni schools, particularly on family law — and was greatly influenced by the fundamentalist works of an earlier Hanbali scholar, Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyya (b. 1263). Ibn Taymiyya preached unwavering adherence to the Hanbali view that the only true Islamic doctrine was based on two of the recognized sources of Islamic law, the Qur’an and the Sunna.<sup>1</sup> A major precept of Wahhabism, therefore, was rejection of any religious belief or practice not based on those two sources, which he considered a heretical “innovation” (*bid‘a*). For example, he condemned intercessional prayers (*tawassul*) to Muslim saints and viewed pilgrimages to their tombs as heresy. He preached that the only valid intercession was to the one true God.

The doctrine of *Tawhid*, or monotheism, is the basic tenet of Islam, expressed in the *Shahada*, or profession of faith: “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” It is thus the basic focus of Wahhabism. The term *Tawhid* is derived from the Arabic word *wahid*, meaning “one.”

The centrality of *Tawhid* in Wahhabism led its followers to call themselves “Muwahhi-

1. There are four recognized Sunni schools (s. *madhhab*, pl. *madhhahib*), Hanafi, Shafa‘i, Maliki and Hanbali, and three Shi’a schools, Ja‘fari, Zaydi, and Isma‘ili.



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din,” or Unitarians. They rejected the term Wahhabism, coined by the movement’s adversaries, as a derogatory reference to his founders. Muwahhidin, on the other hand, considered the term to be heretical as a sign of deifying Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab and thus denigrating the omnipotence of God.

In addition to the Qur’an and the Sunna, other sources include the consensus (*ijma’*) of the Muslim community, and some schools recognize using analogies (*qiyas*) and independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). By Ibn Wahhab’s time, many Sunni legal scholars had abandoned *ijtihad*, but the Shaykh himself held the view that because the Qur’an and the Sunna were the only immutable sources, even the legal interpretations of the accepted schools of Islamic jurisprudence, including the Hanbali school, were subject to reexamination based on those sources.

As a fundamentalist, Ibn Wahhab subscribed to the classical Islamic interpretation of jihad that included Qur’anic verses supporting holy war, or “Jihad of the Sword.” But like many Arabic terms, jihad has multiple shades of meaning. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s teachings concentrated more on the broader connotation, the obligation of all Muslims to uphold virtue and oppose evil in their personal as well as corporate lives. *Tawhid*, not militant Jihad, was the main focus of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s call for reform.<sup>2</sup>

In short, Wahhabism is about the revival of the fundamental doctrines of Islam as set forth in the Qur’an and Sunna, and about the rejection of heretical innovations that had crept into Islam since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Its founder, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was a religious reformer, not a political ideologue.

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**In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Najdi, many political leaders found Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s vision appealing as a means of uniting the constantly warring Najdi tribes into a single Muslim community (*umma*).**

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#### WAHHABISM AS POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Although its religious content has not changed since its inception, political implications of Wahhabism were present from the start. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Najdi, many political leaders found Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s vision appealing as a means of uniting the constantly warring Najdi tribes into a single Muslim community (*umma*). For the Najdi tribesmen who engaged in tribal warfare as a way of life, Wahhabism gave traditional warfare a higher moral purpose and justification.

The initial catalyst in adopting Wahhabism as a political ideology was an early follower of the reform movement, Muhammad ibn Saud, the amir of the small, isolated Najdi principality of Dir‘iyyah and the founder of the Al Saud (House of Saud), still the ruling house of Saudi Arabia. Under him, Wahhabism became the vehicle for legitimizing the Al Saud regime. From that day to this, it has been the political ideology of the Saudi state. The descendants of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab became known as Al al-Shaykh (House of the Shaykh) and remain the most prominent family in the Saudi

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2. See Chapter 5, “Jihad: Call to Islam or Call to Violence,” in Natana DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival to Global Jihad*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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religious establishment. The relationship between these two families has been in effect a pact joining the secular and spiritual aspects of Saudi governance.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Al Saud had expanded their rule over much of Arabia. But the regime was overthrown in 1818, regained power, and in 1891 was again overthrown and went into exile in Kuwait. In 1901, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz bin ‘Abd al-Rahman Al Saud set out to regain the Al Saud patrimony under the banner of Wahhabism. Gathering loyal Wahhabi tribal warriors along the way, he retook Riyadh in 1902. It took two decades for him to defeat the Al Rashid, however; in 1921 the Ikhwan, as he called his Wahhabi tribal warriors, finally captured the Rashidi capital, al-Ha’il.

‘Abd al-‘Aziz went on to reconquer the Hijaz, and after formally annexing it in 1926, he took the title of King. He then demobilized the Ikhwan, settling them in agricultural communes. Many of the tribal warriors were not willing to accept civilian life, however, and rebelled against him. They were defeated at the battle of Sibila in 1929, the last Bedouin battle in history. Thereafter, Saudi Arabia went without a standing army until after World War II.<sup>3</sup>

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**During the Cold War, few objections were made to these Islamic foreign aid projects. Saudi Wahhabism was viewed as an ideological ally against Communism or else ignored it entirely.**

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In 1932, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz renamed the country the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Since then its history has been one of evolution from the former small Najdi principality to a modern nation-state and leading oil power. The era of Saudi tribal warfare had come to an end. But Wahhabism remained the political ideology of the Al Saud regime.

As a part of its concern for the welfare of the Muslim world, the Saudi regime has allocated a significant amount of its oil revenues to building Islamic schools and mosques throughout the Muslim world. During the Cold War, few objections were made to these Islamic foreign aid projects. Saudi Wahhabism was viewed as an ideological ally against Communism or else ignored it entirely. It was only after the Cold War ended and jihadist terrorism began to expand that the Islamic schools and mosques were linked by critics to teaching jihadist terrorism.

#### LINKING WAHHABISM AND CONTEMPORARY JIHADIST TERRORISM

As noted, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a religious reformer, not a political ideologue. The most influential apologist of modern Jihadist terrorism was an Egyptian intellectual and member of the militant Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). Qutb’s advocacy of global holy war against all presumed enemies of Islam has had a far greater influence on present day Jihadist terrorists, including Usama bin Ladin, than have the writings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The adherents of Qutb’s teachings on contemporary global Jihadism (whether they have read his works or not) are *mujahidin* (jihadist warriors). By contrast, those who adhere to the teachings of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab on *Tawhid* are *muwahhidin*.<sup>4</sup>

3. In the latter 1930s, King ‘Abd al-Aziz recalled tribal levies in a brief war with Yemen, and ended up annexing Asir province, located next to Yemen on the Red Sea, and Najran province, formerly a part of Yemen located further inland.

4. For an in-depth analysis contrasting the Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab and Sayyid Qutb, see Long-Bas, “Jihad: Call to

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Even the writings of Qutb, however, do not adequately answer the question of why people are motivated to commit terrorist acts. The degree of hostility required to predispose someone to want to engage in lethal violence cannot be taught or learned from the spoken or written word.

What motivates a person to engage in terrorist activity in the name of any militant ideological doctrine, religious or secular, is not the doctrine itself but pre-existing hostility in a stressful world. There are certainly firebrand Wahhabis who adhere to and encourage contemporary jihadist terrorism, but their hostility does not emanate from the doctrines of the fundamentalist religious reform movement of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Moreover, most contemporary jihadist terrorists are not adherents of Wahhabism. The two categories, Wahhabism and contemporary jihadism, are not synonymous.

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# Saudi Arabia's Religious Counter-Terrorist Discourse

Roel Meijer

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Saudi Arabia's recent rehabilitation programs for terrorists have attracted much attention and in general have been profusely praised as proof of the Saudis' vigorous efforts to repress terrorism. In fact, Saudi Arabia's tradition of countering terrorism goes back to the founding of the Saudi state by Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Saud. Known as the "struggle against extremism" (*ghuluw*), Saudi efforts to counter terrorism emerged for the first time in response to the *ikhwan* revolt in 1927-30. This tradition was resurrected following the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Juhayman al-Utaybi and his group in 1979. Since the attacks by "extremists" in 2003, it has been rehashed by the Advisory Committees, which have led the rehabilitation programs in the prisons. More recently, there has been a massive campaign for "intellectual security" (*al-aman al-fikri*), based on the same discourse.

In a sense, the West was wrong when it accused Saudi "Wahhabis" of not doing enough to combat terrorism. On the other hand, the contention that Wahhabism or Salafism is part of the problem seems correct. It remains to be seen if the Saudi counter-discourse can effectively fight its "inner demons" with basically the same religious reasoning on which radical currents draw their justification for revolt and violence. The recent attacks on the Deputy Minister of Interior Muhammad ibn Nayif, and the continual round-ups of new bands of extremists, seem to suggest that the problem has not been laid to rest.

The basic problem is that Saudi Arabia has been built on doctrines that can be given a radical interpretation. Concepts such as *wala' wa al-bara'* (loyalty to Muslims and disavowal of non-Muslims or Muslims who are regarded as incorrect), *jihad* against Muslims who do not adhere to the Wahhabi concept of Islam, and a strict belief in *tawhid* (monotheism) and the rejection of all forms of idolatry, such as the veneration of saints, are generally regarded as extremist by non-Salafi currents. Together with the general Islamic doctrine of the condemnation of injustice (*zulm*), these concepts have a mobilizing potential against authorities when they do not adhere to their own strict doctrine. The thin line between radicalism and moderation is only barely contained by the doctrine of *wali al-amr*, obedience to the ruler — whatever the nature of his political rule. The argument that division (*fitna*) is worse than tyranny (*zulm*) is not very convincing for real zealots.

During the past two centuries, these two contradictory doctrines have held each other in balance. While the Saudi rulers tried to contain, regulate, and mobilize the powerful



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forces it unleashed to gain political power, it was difficult for the zealots to understand that in the end, pragmatic and self-serving objectives prevailed over the doctrine of *tawhid* to which the ruler also should be subject and on which the whole power of the state was based. Caught in the middle, the '*ulama*' might be able to sympathize with the wayward radicals who were willing to sacrifice themselves for higher goals; however, ultimately they knuckled down to the powers that be, aware of their own interests.

In the end, this alliance has led to a host of interrelated concepts that are meant to restrain Wahhabism's politically dangerous dimension. That the '*ulama*' play a major role in this task automatically explains why the Saudi war on terrorism is not just a war of ideas but a battle of religious concepts. Central to it is "extremism" (*ghuluw*) — a term that has a long history and is preferred to "terrorism," which is regarded as a Western, alien term that fails to capture the religious dimension. Extremism is related to other classic concepts, such as deviation (*inhiraf*) and misguidance (*dalal*). Opposed to these is the idea that Wahhabism is Islam, and therefore is moderate and balanced; moreover, to be a good Muslim is to walk the middle ground (*wasatiyya*) between the extremes of too much or too little.

It would be wrong, however, to believe that the Saudi campaign to counter extremism is based entirely on doctrine, although the root of the problem is ignorance (*jahl*) and success is measured by degree of repentance (*tawba*). An important part of the campaign is the effort to imbue believers with correct manners or behavior (*akhlaq*). As the terrorist is someone who has lost his rationality and is commanded by "passions" (e.g., hatred and envy) or by selfish "inclinations" (e.g., greed), it is necessary to bring him back to the fold and instill in him a correct attitude based on restraint, respect, the common good, and brotherhood. This, in turn, will not just turn him into a law-abiding citizen but also into an apolitical citizen, for all forms of criticism and self-reflection are considered innovations (*bid'a*), the major sin in Salafism, and deviation.

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Needless to say, much of this effort by Saudi authorities is directed to reassert not just the authority of the state but also that of the '*ulama*', the guardians of the correct doctrine and religious knowledge (*'ilm*) to whom all believers must refer their problems and submit to their fatwas, in order for them to establish their correct behavior.

As in the rest of the world, the "war on terrorism" in Saudi Arabia has led to a deepening of the state's control over its citizens. The struggle against "deviation" has always been a means of mind control in Saudi Arabia. But once the misguidance of youth was recognized as a problem, the war against extremism has given the state and the '*ulama*' a new opportunity to penetrate deeper into society and find new ways of securing the *status quo*. The form this has taken is that of the nationwide "intellectual security" (*al-aman al-fikri*) campaign. If the Advisory Committees had been founded in 2003 to pull the detainees in prisons to the right side of Wahhabism, the intellectual security campaign, which was

launched in 2007, is focused on society at large. Interestingly, it has modernized its older religious terms — mobilizing “science” for this purpose, installing the Nayif Chair for Intellectual Security Studies, and organizing a massive program of seminars and workshops for universities, secondary schools, family counseling institutions, and social workers — in order to be able to recognize, detect, and combat deviation at all levels of society. As part of this campaign, the Nayif Chair organized in May 2009 a three-day conference on the concept of intellectual security. Though ostensibly academic, the titles of the papers and the heavy attendance of both state and religious dignitaries shows how difficult it is for the academic field to emancipate itself from the religious and political field.

Not everyone has been as enthusiastic about the concept of intellectual security. On websites and newspapers, interesting debates have raged about the implications of intellectual security. Only a few, however, seem to be able to break out of the confines of this religious discourse on deviation and have suggested that political, economic, or social factors might be reasons for terrorism. Even fewer critics point out that combating terrorism with basically the same discourse can backfire: they correctly point out that this counter-discourse only hinges on such a feeble doctrine as *wali al-amr* and the concept that division is worse than unity, or such suggestions that the Saudi state upholds the struggle against *zulm* and is the embodiment of *wasatiyya*. Once this illusion is punctured, the whole building collapses and can be used against the innocuous prince and its ‘*ulama*’, who lose themselves in the purification of doctrine.



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# Liberal Enclaves: A Royal Attempt to Bypass Clerical Power

Andrew Hammond

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Within the first months of ‘Abdullah’s term as King, the Saudi government pursued a number of policies to improve the Kingdom’s economic profile. Saudi Arabia became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the limits were raised on foreign stakes in sectors such as banking, telecommunications services, wholesale, retail, and franchising. These reforms were intended to answer the economic priorities of diversifying from dependence on oil revenues, finding jobs for young Saudis, and opening up foreign investment. But they had another function too, one that was more transparent in a centerpiece of the early period of ‘Abdullah’s reign: the establishment of “economic cities” where, freed from the influence of the Wahhabi clerics, Saudis would live, work, and study as productive members of a modern economy.

The lead project was the King ‘Abdullah Economic City, which was announced in December 2005. Three more have followed for Jizan, Hail, and Medina. For now little more than an expanse of desert by the sea north of Jeddah, the King Abdullah City has been sold in publicity material as a hypermodern, eco-friendly *mélange* of port and industrial zone, financial center, residential quarters, luxury resort, and schools and colleges — a Dubai on the Red Sea coast. With images of men and women in beach wear, its developer Emaar Economic City, a subsidiary of Dubai’s Emaar, proclaimed in 2005 “the dawn of a kingdom in a new colour.”<sup>1</sup> Officials let it be known in foreign media that women would be allowed to drive cars, schools and universities would be co-educational, the gender restrictions in public places would be relaxed, and Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal’s entertainment firm Rotana could operate cinema houses. Housing two million people by its completion around 2020, the city was to be a model of urban renewal and modern education, as well as a zone where the rules of society were put in abeyance. Though no one has said so publicly, the city was intended to be a liberal enclave in Saudi Arabia’s sea of religious conservatism. As such, the project encapsulated the hopes of socioeconomic reform that the Saudi liberal class invested in King Abdullah when the long, turbulent era of King Fahd finally came to an end.

The economic city/liberal enclave innovation was part of a wider shift engendered by the hijacking of civilian airliners in the United States by an al-Qa‘ida cell on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 attacks were a serious blow to Saudi prestige and created panic within the ruling dynasty for the future of the state in which they had monopolized political power since 1932. Fifteen of the attackers were Saudi, and they acted in the

1. “Saudi to get \$26 bln makeover with tourism project,” *Reuters*, December 20, 2005.



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name of a group headed by a Saudi, and driven by an ideology shared in essence by the Saudi class of Wahhabi religious scholars, or *'ulama'* (the precepts of jihad and *takfir*, or holy war and pronouncing other Muslims and non-Muslims as infidels). The reformist wing of the royal family led by 'Abdullah seized the moment to gain the upper hand over his hawkish half-brothers Sultan and Nayif, who saw no need to upset the clerics by reducing their grip on society through the mosque, education system, the judiciary, and their coercive apparatus, the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. 'Abdullah's calculation was that Saudi Arabia needed to offer a better image to the world if it wanted to challenge the idea fashionable among some circles close to the Bush Administration of toppling the regime, as was of course planned for Iraq. That meant smoothing the rougher edges of *al-Wahhabiyya*, though nothing as drastic as breaking the historical alliance with its *'ulama'*.

The Saudi-Wahhabi state contains other liberal zones where Wahhabi social control is relaxed. They include parts of the city of Jeddah where some restaurants play music and allow unrelated men and women to sit together, on the assumption that the religious police will not drop by. Jeddah's summer festival has included a cinema section since 2006, and concerts have featured rappers, reflecting the more liberal social attitudes of the Hejaz region compared to the Najd. The religious police generally avoid the diplomatic district in Riyadh and the town of Dhahran on the Gulf coast that houses state oil firm, Aramco. They maintain a light presence in neighboring Khobar, but a strong presence in the more conservative Dammam in the same Eastern Province vicinity. This year the King 'Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was inaugurated at a lavish ceremony north of Jeddah next to the economic city, the latest addition to the small set of liberal enclaves.

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KAUST has been *fêted* in Western media as one of the final gambles of an octogenarian monarch in his twilight years to outflank the repressive clerics.<sup>2</sup> KAUST breaks with tradition on many fronts. It is run by Saudi Aramco, widely seen as the country's most efficient and modern corporate institution. It has a foreigner, from Singapore, as its President, and faculty hired from around the world at immense expense. It opens with a huge \$10 billion endowment said to be from the King's own pocket. Its curricula are designed by Western consultants rather than the Education Ministry where, despite the hype, Wahhabism still reigns. There is no question of marauding religious police seeking to impose gender segregation on the premises.

It is not unlikely that this will be the fate of the King 'Abdullah Economic City. Domestic media has never presented the economic city concept in the way it was described to foreigners. When foreign media used the phrase "liberal enclave" in 2008, there was a visceral reaction from conservatives.<sup>3</sup> The government has not even hinted that the subsequent

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2. "This might just be the last chance the king gets to institutionalize his progressive legacy and improve the future of his troubled land.seem," *Newsweek* wrote; "The King Versus the Radicals," *Newsweek*, May 26, 2008.

3. The author of this article was the subject of the attack. News website <http://sabq.net> ran several stories including "*sahafi reuters hammond yuwasil talfiq al-akhbar 'an al-saudiyya*." Note the comments that followed in the web forum: [www.sabq.net](http://www.sabq.net).

economic cities announced for Hail, Jizan, and Medina would be similarly segregated from Wahhabi power.<sup>4</sup> Religious conservatives have consolidated their position after the period of intense Western pressure for reform and brief sense of empowerment that liberals enjoyed in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The maneuvering of Interior Minister Prince Nayif this year to secure the succession while Crown Prince Sultan wrestles abroad with intestinal cancer has further emboldened the conservatives. Nayif, who is the main backer of the religious police, declared in June 2009 that they were on a par with the security forces in his eyes.<sup>5</sup>

‘Abdullah removed the chief of the morality police in February 2009, in what was interpreted at the time as a sign of the “reform King” pushing his agenda further. The Commission was embroiled in a number of publicity embarrassments in 2007 and 2008, including the death in their custody of two men. The family of one of them, Salman al-Hurasy, say they witnessed him being beaten to death. The King also appointed a new Minister of Justice and removed Shaykh Salih al-Luhaydan from his post as head of the *Shari’a* courts, moves that were interpreted as a boost to ‘Abdullah’s plans for judicial reforms in line with WTO membership that have aroused clerical suspicion. But on the ground events spoke of a different trend. The Jeddah film festival was inexplicably cancelled at the last minute in July, and clerics involved with the morality police used the press to attack other fixtures of the Jeddah summer festival that also were stopped.<sup>6</sup>

Liberals and conservatives have been locked in fierce debate since the 1980s. Although at the level of elites, this debate is unresolved, religious conservatives are by far the dominant force in society (as the results of limited municipal elections in 2005 demonstrated). Generally, they are the dominant force because of the fundamental structure of the state, a division of power between the ruling dynasty which controls state policy and the Wahhabi clerics, who control society. But more specifically, they are dominant because the convergence of three events — the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the seizing of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Wahhabi zealots opposed to the royal family — caused a panicked Al Saud to retrench and reinforce the social control mechanism by further empowering the forces of *al-Wahhabiyya*. Saudi society as a result went through a kind of “re-Islamization” in the 1980s after a period of laxity in the 1970s, when the regime felt secure in the wake of secular Arab nationalism’s discrediting in the 1967 Arab-Israel war, though of course it was not enough for the so-called “Sahwa” clerics — subsequently arrested for their dissent in the 1990s — who wanted still more.

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[org/inf/news-action-show-id-8281.htm](http://org/inf/news-action-show-id-8281.htm).

4. Emaar Economic City CEO Fahd Al-Rasheed talked of King ‘Abdullah City surrounded by a fence: “It is private property so there is some sort of need to have some sort of separation.” Interview with author, July 2008.

5. “Key Saudi prince gives backing to religious police,” *Reuters*, June 17, 2009.

6. See “Saudi religious police crack down on summer festivals,” *Reuters*, August 26, 2009.

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Rather than tackle the unresolved debate between liberals and conservatives, modernizers in the regime have promoted bubbles of modernity as an alternative. Yet even these liberal enclaves are coming under pressure. Many of the liberals, a term that embraces a loose collection of leftists, Arab nationalists, human rights activists, and Western-oriented elites, have crowded around their patrons among Al Saud for protection and solace. Thus, editor Jamal Khashoggi, who served as Prince Turki al-Faysal's media advisor at the Saudi Embassy in London and Washington, attacks the '*ulama*' for their extremism from his pulpit in *al-Watan*, the paper owned by Prince Turki's brother Prince Khaled where Khashoggi is editor-in-chief. Thus, Ibrahim al-Mugaiteeb, a rights activist who has suffered for his efforts to catalogue and publicize Interior Ministry abuse, says he looks to the royal family as a "safety valve."<sup>7</sup> And thus a Saudi Prince could say: "[Saudi Arabia] is one of the rare cases in the world with a liberal government and a conservative population and society."<sup>8</sup>

Those who have sought a clear program of political reform that could offer a way out of the impasse have been thrown in jail or put on trial. Thirteen were arrested in 2004 after presenting a petition for a constitutional monarchy, three of whom were put on trial, and nine, including three who wrote another petition, were detained without trial in 2007. But influential clerics who involved themselves in previous calls for reform — indeed, they led the movement of dissent during 1991-4 — have been silent. They have all the incentive. Their system of social control remains intact, despite the half-hearted attempts to challenge them. As Sahwa preacher Muhsin al-Awaji says bluntly: "This country was set up on religious bases and it will stay that way forever. It can never change."<sup>9</sup>

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7. "Without them I don't know what could happen to this country," Mugaiteeb said; interview with author, September 2009.

8. Interview with Prince Bandar bin Saud bin Khalid Al Saud, March 2006.

9. Interview with author, August 2008.

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# The Neo-Reformists: A New Democratic Islamic Discourse

Saud al-Sarhan

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In the late 1970s, two Muslim figures attempted to make their ideas of the True Islamic State a reality. Imam Ruhollah Khomeini succeeded forming the “Islamic Republic of Iran” under the ideology of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Juhayman al-‘Utaybi failed with his friends in “*al-Jama‘a al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba*” to establish the apocalyptic “Rightly Caliphate” (*al-Khilafa al-Rashida*) under the Mahdi’s<sup>2</sup> rule in Mecca. Despite these differences, Khomeini and Juhayman agreed on one thing: the “Islamic Government” must be ruled by God’s rules, not human law. Both Khomeini and Juhayman rejected democracy because it promoted governance through man-made laws and not those of God.<sup>3</sup>



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The relationship between democracy and *Shari‘a* law has been a point of contention between various Islamists throughout the Muslim world but, despite the different intellectual and political orientations and affiliations in the country, it has never been problematic among those in Saudi Arabia. Islamists in Saudi Arabia have uniformly considered democracy a form of paganism, not a legitimate political system or regime. They have moved democracy from the political arena to the sphere of religious belief by condemning it through an uncompromising and purist religious discourse.

Islamists in the Kingdom have viewed democracy as a pagan creed because it promotes governance through man-made laws and not those of God. Thus, they have regarded parliaments as institutions of arbitrary rule and places in which *kufr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (polytheism) dominate because the laws that are proposed and enacted are not rooted in God’s revelation.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government* (New York: Manor Books, 1979).

2. Mahdi means the rightly guided one. Here it refers to Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Qahtani (killed in 1979), whom Juhayman and his colleagues in the *al-Jama‘a al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba* believe is the awaited Mahdi.

3. See: Juhayman ‘Utaybi, *Risala fi al-Imara wa-al-Bay‘a wa-al-Ta‘a* (Essay on the Emirate and Pledge of Allegiance and Obedience), available at [www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=6513&x=fcchouzr](http://www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=6513&x=fcchouzr); and Khomeini, Ruh Allah, *Islamic Government*.

4. See, for example, Safar al-Hawali, *Muhadarah: Qira‘a fi al-dasatir al-qawmiyya* (Lecture: A Reading on Nationalist Constitutions); Nasir al-‘Umar, *Min Tawabi‘ al-intikhabat al-amrikiyya: madha sana‘at al-dimuqratiyya?* (The Aftermath of US Elections: What has Democracy Achieved?), available at <http://www.almoslim.net/node/102742>; ‘Ali al-Khudhayr, *Fatwa fi hukm al-barlamanat* (A Fatwa about the Legality of Parliaments) <unpublished>; Mani’ al-Juhani and others, *al-Mawsu‘ah al-muyassara fi al-adyan wa al-madhahib wa al-ahzab al-mu‘asira* (Encyclopaedia of Religions, Sects and Contemporary Parties), Vol. 2, pp. 1056-7.



In the early 1990s, Islamists throughout the Arab world began participating in parliamentary elections such as in Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, and Kuwait; and they looked for *fatwas* from Saudi scholars to legitimize this participation. The *fatwas* they received varied.

Despite the unanimous agreement among Saudi religious scholars that legislation is an exclusive right of God's and challenging this right by participating in Parliament constitutes *kufur*, some Saudi scholars (e.g., Grand Mufti 'Abd al 'Aziz ibn Baz and Muhammad ibn 'Uthaymin) provided the Islamists in neighboring countries with *fatwas* allowing them to join the Parliament on certain conditions. On the other hand, other scholars maintained their position that parliamentary participation is prohibited.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars provided a *fatwa* which conditioned the Islamists' participation in Parliament on making the government adopt Islamic law and to use Parliament as a means to overthrowing the ruling regime. A further condition disallowed those who were running for Parliament from accepting a government office that was in contradiction with Islamic law.<sup>6</sup> They also pointed out that an oath of loyalty to the constitution is prohibited because one should be loyal only to God. They offered a way out of this bind by requiring the newly elected member of Parliament to maintain in his heart the intention to plead allegiance to the constitution as long as it is not contrary to *Shari'a*. This is on the basis of the accepted principle that deeds are based on intentions.<sup>7</sup>

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Within the Saudi Islamist camp there have been a number of attempts to re-consider Islamic political theory and to make democracy compatible with *Shari'a*.<sup>8</sup> The only attempt that has truly succeeded in generating a debate among Islamists about this question resulted from a collection of published articles by Dr. Muhammad Hamid al-Ahmari, who has written extensively to prove that there is no clash between Islam and democracy and states that the latter is to be considered the best type of regime available today despite its flaws, which he believes can be corrected.

Following the war between Hezbollah and Israel in August 2006, Al-Ahmari wrote an article entitled "The Pitfall of Analyzing Matters Theologically"<sup>9</sup> in which he criticizes the interference of religious scholars in political affairs. He explains the shortcomings of analyzing politics by using theology, warning that despite the importance of the religious in political matters, it should not be the only perspective to adopt.<sup>10</sup>

5. See, for example, Rabi' al-Madkhali, in his book: *Jama'a wahida la jama'at wa sirat wahid la 'asharat* (One Community not Communities and One Path not Tens of Paths). pp. 39-40.

6. *Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Da'ima lil Buhuth al-Ilmiyya wa al-Ifta'*, Vol. 23, pp. 406-7. The *fatwa* was issued by Ibn Baz, 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Afifi, 'Abd Allah b. Ghudayyan and 'Abd Allah b. Qu'ud.

7. This *fatwa* was issued by Ibn 'Uthaymin. See: Hamad al-Hajiri, *hukm al-dimuqratiyah fi al-Islam* [The Legal Value of Democracy in Islam], p. 5 (unpublished).

8. For example, 'Abd Allah al-Hamid.

9. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Khid'at al-tahlil al-'Aqadi* (The Trick of Theological Analysis), available at <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=8070>.

10. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Khid'at al-tahlil al-'Aqadi*.



Al-Ahmari describes theological analysts as “narrow-minded, limited in [their] range of thinking and interpretation, [and] who win the approval of those [like them who are] limited in their thinking and cannot tolerate a diversity of views.” He adds: “A one-sided narrow-minded way of thinking that does not allow any room for diversity of thought and may work well for mob leaders and military officials in the battlefield, but it does not work well on people of a higher level or in controlling a state because it will fail due to its narrow, limited and weak ideological foundation. The political process will fail even though such school of thought succeeds with the mob.”<sup>11</sup>

Al-Ahmari wrote another article in celebration of the victory of Barak Obama in the 2008 US presidential election which generated many reactions. Entitled “The Victory of Democracy over Paganism in the US elections,”<sup>12</sup> Al-Ahmari describes this election as a

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**Obama’s win is no longer one man’s victory, but a triumph of principles and ideas. It is an example that the people of the Arab region need to emulate. Democracy is no longer paganism.**

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victory for the democracy of numbers (the will of the majority), the democracy of opinions (the public took heed of opposite opinions), and the democracy of interests (opposition is necessary to evaluate the best position). Democracy triumphed over race (a black man won), and gender (a woman almost won the election). Democracy [until now] has not triumphed over religion; if Obama was a Muslim, he would not have won the presidency. If he was an Arab, he may not have won either. However, this is what has happened now, and what the future holds remains unknown. Yet, [we should] remember that two people of Arab origin are competing in the state of New Hampshire.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Ahmari saw in Obama’s victory a triumph for minorities, which further confirms the value of freedom in the US. He adds a sharp comment on the state of the Arab world saying: “It is part of this world’s fate that freedom and the respect for it are firmly rooted in a government [US government] that is superior to us, which brings the hope that freedom will seep through to the societies of backwardness and slavery. It is part of this world’s luck that we aspire to create our own freedom and require the freed to treat us as humans and help us get rid of the worship of our idols.”<sup>14</sup> Obama’s win is no longer one man’s victory, but a triumph of principles and ideas. It is an example that the people of the Arab region need to emulate. Democracy is no longer paganism. In fact, the dictatorships that rule the Muslim world and the ideologies that protect them are.

Al-Ahmari’s articles generated numerous and varied reactions, which were reflected in scores of newspaper pages and internet websites that debated and discussed his ideas, not to mention television interviews and lectures in literary

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11. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Khid’at al-tahlil al-‘Aqadi*.

12. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Intisar al-dimuqratiyya ‘ala al-wathaniyya fi al-intikhabat al-amrikiyya* [The Victory of Democracy over Paganism in the US Elections], <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&ContentId=10439>.

13. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Intisar al-dimuqratiyya ‘ala al-wathaniyya fi al-intikhabat al-amrikiyya*

14. Muhammad al-Ahmari, *Intisar al-dimuqratiyya ‘ala al-wathaniyya fi al-intikhabat al-amrikiyya*

clubs. Furthermore, his articles elicited powerful reactions from a group of Salafis and theologians,<sup>15</sup> as might be expected. Most of these reactions dealt with side issues and were of a sectarian nature that used a dogmatic language and failed to present any constructive discussion of Al-Ahmari's views. However, one particular Salafi group sought to answer Al-Ahmari to illustrate that democracy is not a political paradise, but rather is a flawed system since the election process levels the differences between the commoners and the elites, which is unacceptable.<sup>16</sup> Democracy, this group argued, is another form of colonialism.<sup>17</sup> The most important response to al-Ahmari's ideas came from Dr. Nasir al-'Umar who criticized the state of obsession that has befallen writers following Obama's victory in the US election. Despite al-'Umar's admission of the relative existence of freedom in the US, he believes that the US system of governance is a dictatorship since democracy is not a synonym of freedom. Voters are subjected to the influence of the media, which in turn control their thinking. Meanwhile, the media are under the power of a controlling clique.<sup>18</sup>

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Al-Ahmari responded powerfully to all those who criticized him. One of the most important issues he pointed out in his response is the role of the media in influencing election results. He uncovered the hypocrisy of the religious scholars who employed money and the media in their municipal election campaigns in Saudi Arabia in 2005 and parliamentary ones in Kuwait. He writes:

Who is it who speaks of using money and publicity? I hope these people remember the competition between Salafis and the brothers [i.e., Muslim Brotherhood] in the municipal elections in the Kingdom and the Islamists' internecine struggle in Kuwait. If these are crimes then the so-called "Golden lists" issued by the Islamists, the publicity and banquets are a front for the struggle between the Islamists, who donated and spent money and whose legitimacy was never questioned. No one objected to these practices, so why object now when this pertains to the non-Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

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15. For example, see Lutf Allah Khujah, *Sidq al-tahlil al-'aqadi* [The Truthfulness of Theological Analysis], <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&ContentId=8227>; and Bandar Al-Shuwayqi, *Khid'at al-tahlil al-siyasi* [The Trick of Political Analysis], <http://www.dorar.net/art/61>.

16. 'Abd al-Rahim al-Silmi, *al-Azmah al-waqi'iyya li-l-dimuqratiyya* [The Real Crisis of Democracy], <http://www.alqlm.com/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=497>; and Badr al-'Amir, *Hawas al-dimuqratiyya* [The Obsession with Democracy], <http://www.islamtoday.net/nawafeth/artshow-40-105729.htm>.

17. Badr al-'Amir, *Hawas al-dimuqratiyya* [The Obsession with Democracy], <http://www.islamtoday.net/nawafeth/artshow-40-105729.htm>.

18. Nasir Al-'Umar, *al-Diktaturiyya al-fikriyyah allati yumarisuha du'at al-dimuqratiyya akhtar min al-idariyya* [The Intellectual Dictatorship Exercised by the Promoters of Democracy is More Dangerous than the Administrative], <http://www.almoslim.net/node/102391>. Al-'Umar repeated and expanded on these ideas in his article: *Min tawabi' al-intikhabat al-amrikiyya: wa madha sana'at al-dimuqratiyya?* [The Aftermath of the US Elections: What Has Democracy Achieved?], <http://www.almoslim.net/node/102742>.

19. *Okaz Newspaper*, Issue 2720, November 27, 2008.

al-Ahmari fought vociferously for his opinions, and the Islamists similarly responded, which enriched the Islamic-political discourse and the understanding of Saudi Islamists of the meaning of democracy and freedom. Al-Ahmari was not alone in defending his ideas, as many adopted his views, which prompted his opponents to call them the “neo-reformists.”<sup>20</sup> The details of this struggle deserve further examination, which will not be possible due to the space constraints here.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of al-Ahmari’s opinions lies, first of all, in his ability to recapture politics from the sphere of religious debate to that of worldly affairs by exposing theological analysis to criticism and questioning its credibility. He was able to bring the Islamists to discuss the value of democracy instead of being content with prohibiting it and projecting it as a form of blasphemy. This includes getting them to acknowledge, both implicitly and explicitly, its value to the here and now.

Second, al-Ahmari managed to stir a strong debate amongst the Islamists in Saudi Arabia, which no other writer has managed to achieve. One reason for this is al-Ahmari’s “past,” having been one of the prominent ideologues of the “Islamic awakening” (*Sahwa*) in the 1990s. Furthermore, his strong and sharp language succeeded in provoking many. He remained very active by writing in the press and by appearing on television talk shows and on the lecture circuit, which he used to clarify his ideas and respond to his opponents.

Third, al-Ahmari succeeded in restoring a degree of respect for such ideals as freedom and democracy among some of the Islamists, albeit to a limited degree.

Al-Ahmari is presently leading a new reformist Islamic trend in the Kingdom — one that aims to restore the respect of individual freedom in relation to political and religious despotism. It remains an open question how successful this trend will be.

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20. For example, see N. Qudaymi, *Ashwaq al-Hurriyya* [*Longing for Freedom*] and Fouad al-Farhan, *al-Tahlil al-‘aqadi li-l-intikhabat al-amrikiyya* [*The Theological Analysis of the US Elections*], <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=1047>.

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# Saudi-Shi'ite Political Relations in the Kingdom

*Toby Jones*

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Saudi Arabia always has been a tough neighborhood for religious minorities. This has been especially true for the Kingdom's Shi'ites, the country's largest minority, with almost two million of them living in the oil-rich Eastern Province. From early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Shi'ites have been the targets of scorn and opprobrium, much of it with the official blessing of the Saudi rulers. The origins of anti-Shi'ite enmity are hardly a mystery. The Kingdom's official religious orthodoxy, an interpretation of Islam often called Wahhabism, was based in large measure on hostility toward Shi'ism and its adherents. Confronted with contempt and forced to endure harsh treatment, Shi'ites have suffered considerable neglect as second-class citizens in almost 100 years of Saudi rule. Although most live in close proximity to the source of Saudi Arabia's wealth, Shi'ites have largely never benefited from the windfall brought by oil, struggling in tough social and environmental conditions — left behind in an era of prosperity.



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While little has changed with regard to the material, social, and economic status of Shi'ites over time, their political relations have transformed dramatically in the last 30 years. The year 1979 marked the pivotal turning point, the moment when Saudi Arabia's Shi'ites began to fight back against oppression and forever redefined their relationship with the ruling family. And for better *and* worse, the legacy of 1979 continues to shape the relationship between the Saudis and the Shi'ites today.

In November 1979 thousands of dissidents stormed the streets of the Eastern Province in an uprising that shocked the Kingdom and its rulers. Frustrated by their status as second-class citizens, activists directed their ire at the government, unleashing a violent wave of unrest. Saudi security forces used overwhelming force to crush the rebellion. The uprising proved politically transformative. From 1913, when the Al Saud conquered what would become the Eastern Province and incorporated it into their domain, to the late 1970s, most Shi'ites embraced and had practiced a form of political quietism. Community leaders had pushed for social and political justice, but had striven to avoid provoking a confrontation with Saudi authorities or their most zealous supporters. By the late 1970s, a new generation of political aspirants, what would become the vanguard of a new leadership, embraced a more radical approach to community affairs, using religion as a pretext for revolutionary activism. Their calls for revolution culminated in the 1979 uprising.

The embrace of violence, strident anti-Saudi sentiment, and devotion to revolution de-

fined the Shi'ite approach to politics during the 1980s. Many of those who took to the streets in 1979 were either killed or detained. The rest fled into exile, seeking political shelter in places like Damascus, London, and Washington, DC. From their perches abroad, the most committed activists continued to champion revolution, publishing a monthly journal and working to bring to light human rights and other abuses in the Kingdom.

For their part, Saudi Arabia's rulers viewed the upsurge in activism and the radicalization of the community as the direct result of Iran's Islamic Revolution. They considered the 1979 uprising not only as an important bellwether of politics at home, but also an indication of Iran's mounting regional power. The uprising, then, seemed to be as much a geopolitical problem as a local political one. During the 1980s the Kingdom dealt with Shi'ite activism as it did Iran, with suspicion and a heavy hand.

After a decade in exile, however, the Shi'ite community's main leaders — Hassan al-Saffar and his closest lieutenants — began to soften their tone. By the end of the 1980s they renounced violence and pressed instead for democratic reform in Saudi Arabia and the protection of religious minorities. Key activists continued to publish a monthly newsletter and shed light on abuses in the Kingdom, but they ceased calls for violence. Their change in tone created a political opening. Attuned to the transformation that had taken place, Saudi leaders, who had grown increasingly embarrassed by efforts to unveil the Kingdom's excesses, pursued *rapprochement* with al-Saffar and his supporters. In exchange for ending their publishing campaign, Saudi Arabia welcomed many of the one-time revolutionaries home and assured them that the Kingdom finally would address some of the community's most pressing social, economic, and political concerns.

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Not everyone was ameliorated by the gesture. A number of disaffected and still-angry residents of the Eastern Province refused any conciliation and continued to support violent resistance to Saudi power. Most of these belonged to Hizbullah in the Hijaz, a militant organization that many claim was responsible for a terrorist attack on an American military housing facility in the seaside village of al-Khobar in 1996 that killed 19 American military service personnel and wounded hundreds of others. While the attack raised alarms about the specter of a new round of militancy and the potential of Iranian involvement, the bombings revealed that most Shi'ites had in fact abandoned revolutionary politics and would support efforts at bridge-building with the Saudi government.

From the mid-1990s to today, the dominant political trend in the Shi'ite community has been one focused on reform and pluralism, although there are important indications that this may soon change. The former radicals have patiently and diligently worked toward improving living conditions in their home communities as well as toward carving out space for greater political participation. They remain committed to the principles of non-violence and reform. Their

efforts have met with mixed results. Some Saudi leaders, most notably the current King, have responded favorably to Shi'ite entreaties for relief and protection. Shi'ites have been included in efforts to promote dialogue between Muslims since 2003. In 2005 Shi'ites ran openly and won resounding victories in elections to the country's Municipal Councils, the first time such elections had been held in four decades. Shi'ites also have been afforded opportunities to expand religious observance, most notably by being allowed to publicly commemorate 'Ashura, their most important religious ritual.

But while the Kingdom has moved to address some of the Shi'ite community's most serious concerns, these efforts have also proven to be tenuous, subject to various political pressures and easily reversed. Saudi rulers remain deeply suspicious of the community, the potential that they continue to harbor revolutionary goals, or that they are in fact a fifth column for Iran. The fallout from the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, including the rise of Shi'ite power there and the re-emergence of Iran as a regional rival, has re-opened many of the old wounds. This has meant that the government has slowed or reversed many of its efforts to accommodate Shi'ite religious, social, and cultural desires. Rather than supporting the community's wish to observe its beliefs, in 2009 Saudi authorities have begun again to harass its largest minority, arresting dozens for practicing their faith.

Worse, the Saudi government also has encouraged or condoned anti-Shi'ite radicalism inside the Kingdom. Anti-Shi'ism escalated dramatically in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq and has not yet abated. In February 2009 hundreds of Shi'ite worshippers in Medina were besieged by members of the Saudi religious and regular police. In the days and weeks following, Shi'ite leaders began warning again of the potential for a new era of violent confrontation. Some of these voices were new. Others were familiar, such as a resurgent Saudi Hizbullah — an ominous indication that after decades of disappointing results the community might choose the path of radicalism once again.

For now an uneasy calm has settled over the Eastern Province. But 30 years after the last outbreak of widespread violence, the future of Saudi-Shi'ite political relations remains far from certain.

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# Reforming the Judiciary in Saudi Arabia

Joseph A. Kéchichian

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Though the Saudi royal family still rules the realm, they have initiated a number of reforms over the past 30 years. Some of these reforms have been bolder and more successful than others. Some have been doomed from the very start — a few, perhaps, were intended to be stillborn. Judicial reform is one of the most recent and potentially one of the most important reform initiatives undertaken in the Kingdom.

In late 2007, King ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz allocated nearly \$2 billion to overhaul the Kingdom’s judicial system and upgrade its court facilities, ostensibly to streamline the legal process, which had been and remained a perennial source of dissatisfaction for many. Few perceived the move as being serious. Critics contended that spending a couple of billion dollars would not be effective as long as the ideological foundations on which the entire legal premise of the country continued to be embedded in *Shari‘a* (Islamic law).

Inasmuch as ‘Abdullah is an innovator, his move to reinforce the standing of the country’s courts and, more importantly, to introduce the idea that judges ought to make their rulings free from outside influence, stood out. His desire to “overhaul” — the term itself was revolutionary — the judiciary from the top down was equally bold. The Monarch proposed the establishment of a supreme court, one or more appeals courts, and a general courts system to replace the dated apparatus operating under the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). While some of these measures were meant to expedite ongoing economic reforms, the creation of a supreme court was bound to have far-reaching consequences, including a marked improvement in civil liberties.

## ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS

Although Riyadh’s proposals reflected the need to streamline the Kingdom’s growing economy, not all of the changes were directly related to Saudi interactions with the outside world. In fact, most civil proceedings that involved claims against the government, as well as the enforcement of foreign judgments, were time consuming and problematic, not because they were heard by special administrative tribunals such as the Commission for the Settlement of Labor Disputes or the Board of Grievances, but because these institutions were burdened by a dense bureaucracy. Beyond the intricacies of the laws themselves, disputes were handled by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry committees, or Ministry of Labor minions, which had earned poor reputations for notorious



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rulings that seldom handled commercial disputes fairly. Labor challenges were seldom adjudicated with any degree of impartiality. In short, whimsical bureaucrats tended to err on the side of the impossible, which prevented the development of fair and relatively transparent commercial settlements. Independent commercial courts will now handle disputes that may arise in a more or less impartial way, adjudicating on the merits of a case, rather than subjecting putative decisions to the narrower institutional interests of a particular ministry.

With the creation of independent commercial courts, as well as appropriate appeals tribunals, domestic and foreign investors in Saudi Arabia will presumably receive a far more expeditious enforcement of contracts. Indeed, the purpose of these reforms is precisely to ensure that everyone operates within a sound investment climate — to protect businesses from the vagaries of periodic disputes. Equally important, ‘Abdullah insisted that these technical courts be staffed by specially trained magistrates with knowledge or even expertise in commercial affairs, because he wished to unburden religious courts heretofore saddled with such responsibilities. To his immense credit, the Monarch appreciated the value of his religious *qadis* (judges), but understood that the brightest among them could not possibly display proficiency on every subject. Naturally,

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**How could magistrates render fair rulings on major criminal cases, including those involving death sentences, while simultaneously opining on general *Shari’a* principles?**

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neither the talent nor the training of commercial magistrates could be developed instantaneously. Accordingly, Riyadh embarked on the long-term overhaul of its legal institutions, including bankruptcy legislation, shareholder protection, and the various regulations that governed access to lines of credit. ‘Abdullah was aware that legal reforms were interconnected, which necessitated carefully studied adaptations of the financial sector, working and interacting with both commercial and industrial activities. His challenge was to introduce meaningful improvements in these areas without upsetting existing institutions that legitimized Al Saud rule.

### *THE SUPREME COURT*

To maintain relative harmony, ‘Abdullah abolished the SJC, as he envisaged a functioning replacement that would become the Kingdom’s highest legal tribunal. It may be useful to note that the 1975 Law of the Judiciary (especially Article 5) identified the Supreme Judicial Council as the highest legal authority in Saudi Arabia. Composed of 11 members, the SJC was staffed by five judges who constituted a Permanent Panel of the Council, which acted as its own embedded Appellate Court. These magistrates were full-time members, but were supplemented by another five part-time *qadis*, which included the Chief of the Appellate Court or his deputy, the Deputy Minister of Justice, and the three members with the longest time in service as Chief Judges of the General Courts in Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, Jiddah, Dammam, and/or Jizan. In addition to these ten men, a Chairman appointed by the King convened panelists on an as needed basis. SJC duties encompassed a slew of activities, ranging across administrative, legislative, consultative, and judicial functions. Needless to say, because the SJC supervised most courts, administered employment-related affairs of the judiciary, and assumed the burden of rendering judgments on religious, social, commercial, and myriad other topics, it was nearly impossible for it to function effectively. How could magistrates render fair rulings on major criminal cases, including those involv-

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ing death sentences, while simultaneously opining on general *Shari'a* principles?

The new Supreme Court will have a narrower writ, addressing administrative matters that will concentrate on the selection of judges, the setting up of tribunals, and other specialist courts to implement the King's recommendations. It will not be a body similar to either the US Supreme Court or the British High Court of Justice. Rather, the high court will firstly examine cases involving administrative appeals rulings, to handle disputes involving the rights of employees, compensation, contracts, disciplinary issues, administrative decisions, and the implementation of foreign regulations. A separate Board of Grievances henceforth will supervise administrative disputes involving government departments, which will act as an independent body and be directly answerable to the King. Second, the Supreme Court will focus on selected cases that may require national attention. 'Abdullah apparently recommended that the Supreme Court devise an official website to publish Islamic legal rulings, or *fatwas*, in order to ensure that these — and only these — as yet not fully defined cases are recognized by all scholars who must rely on precedence. Thus, unlike the SJC, the Supreme Court has a prominent guidance role. What remains to be determined, however, is the interaction, or clash as the case may be, between members of the Supreme Court and the Council of Senior '*ulama*' (Islamic scholars). Without questioning the latter's professionalism, Riyadh must ensure that the Supreme Court will grow eventually to become the institution that will uphold all laws in Saudi Arabia — a developing country experiencing growing pains. Over time, a reformed legal system will eliminate arbitrary judgments, and while the codification of laws will not be automatic (as it will remain under *Shari'a*), King 'Abdullah's vision may well strengthen the monarchy.

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Because all legal questions are interpreted through religious rulings in Saudi Arabia, the very idea of "reforms," even if putative, will strike secularists as imaginary at best. Naturally, throwing money at a problem will not necessarily solve any of its intrinsic shortcomings, but the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seems nevertheless to have embarked on one of its most sweeping legal changes in generations.

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# Tribes and the Saudi Legal System: An Assessment of Coexistence

Sebastian Maisel

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Saudi Arabia is overwhelmingly Islamic and has always been ruled under the *Shari'a*, or Islamic law. The sheer existence of an additional legal system in Saudi Arabia, besides the Islamic *Shari'a*, is regarded as an offense against the Islamic character or modernity of the country and its judicial system. Islamic law is supreme in Saudi Arabia, and the idea of the divine right of kings, used to justify absolute monarchies in Christian Europe, would be considered heresy. As divine law, it is immutable and unchangeable. As constitutional law it cannot be amended. All litigation in the Kingdom must be conducted in accordance with the *Shari'a*.



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## THE SAUDI LEGAL SYSTEM

The official legal system in Saudi Arabia is the *Shari'a*, or Islamic law. In 1926, King 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Saud in the process of unifying the country issued an order to unify the judicial system as well, basing it on the Hanbali School of law. He also prohibited the application of tribal customary law. *Shari'a* law was now applicable among the whole population, nomad as well as urban, and its most important message was to command virtue and prevent vice, or in other words, to protect the prophetic tradition and to avoid any innovations.

The *Shari'a* code of behavior is much broader than simply Western legal codes of right and wrong or cultural norms of good and bad. In general, there are five categories of describing human behavior, not just the two of good and bad. On the positive side are two categories; *wajib*, acts that are obligatory, and *mandub*, acts that are recommended and bring reward from God but are not mandatory. On the negative are: *haram*, acts that are prohibited, and *makruh*, acts that are reprehensible but not prohibited.

It is the middle category, *mubah*, however, that has provided the latitude for the Saudi legal system to address legal issues that have arisen as a result of rapid modernization. *Mubah* refers to those acts that are not specifically mentioned in the sources of the law and on which it is indifferent. They cover areas of modern financial, commercial and labor issues that in the West are subject to statutory laws such as commercial and labor contracts. In theory they are not legislated but promulgated in decrees, which are not part of the *Shari'a* itself but must be consistent with it. In addition, special administrative tribunals have been created to adjudicate labor and commercial disputes.

The official view of the country and its judicial institutions is one of a country that strictly follows the guidelines of Islamic Law, *Shari'a*. The necessity of supplementary regulations, which provide answer to legal questions not covered by the *usul al-fiqh* (the origins or fundamentals of the law), is unquestioned considering the country's position in the global economy and diverse population. Thus, it is argued that on an informal level a multitude of legal forms and expressions exists which are recognizable through distinct types of judicial organization: a religious based, a state law based on Western legal principles, and customary tribal law. They are sometimes confrontational, and at other times complementary to each other, but can also overlap and merge in specific areas. Those three legal systems are *Shari'a*, state jurisdiction in areas not covered by *Shari'a* (*marsum*, *nizam*), and the customary law of tribal groups (*'urf*).

In theory, all cases should have been solved according to *Shari'a* law; however, it appears that, at times, *Shari'a* is supplemented with legal measures from other sources, here economic regulations and customary procedures related to the tribes. Non-religious regulations enacted by the government, however, have tended to play a more important role in the wake of the country's modernization. According to the basic law of governance, Royal decrees are issued to supplement the legislation in those matters where *Shari'a* is insufficient, particularly in the fields of finance, economy, and administration. With modern legal reforms, *marsum* and *nizam* became the common names for most laws and regulations, provided that they complied with *Shari'a* norms.

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#### CUSTOMARY LAW OF THE TRIBES

In Saudi Arabia no official laws or regulations were issued that refer exclusively to the Bedouin tribes. In civil and criminal cases that are dealt with in *Shari'a* courts, the principles of Islamic law are applied, usually in accordance with the norms of the Hanbali school. However, in rural areas, tribal law still holds a strong position among the settled, semi-settled, and nomadic populations.

As in other countries, official laws in Saudi Arabia are decreed from the top (i.e. from the King and his legislation). However, other regulations developed from the bottom (i.e. from customs, traditions, and practices of the local community). Whereas law that is issued from above needs the support of a powerful centralized institution, law that arises from customs needs broad public acceptance. *'Urf* commands this kind of general support and respect.

Customary law earns recognition from individuals who see the advantages of behaving according to the expectations of other members of the group to which they belong. Therefore, it does not need a powerful force to maintain law and order, because it is based on mutual understanding and acceptance.

Interchange is the fundamental principle upon which the recognition and enforcement of customary law is based. To



profit from its benefits, one has to follow certain rules. Voluntary acceptance and participation in the enforcement becomes effective only when the individual sees the benefits. For example, the protection of the individual and his kinship group as well as collective property serves as an incentive for individuals to adhere to customary law. Punishment and retaliation constitute the necessary frame, which is further shaped by deterrence and reconciliation.

Law and legal situations are often connected with questions of political hegemony, where governments might form a relationship with other legal systems. In the case of Islamic states, this relationship can be based on the acceptance of local customary practices, their incorporation into the existing legal system, or the denial and ignoring of customary law. The often-cited complaint against customary law — that it is a byproduct of colonial rule — does not count in Saudi Arabia because most of the country never experienced direct colonial rule. The rulers of Saudi Arabia did not use customary law to combat indigenous religious law; on the contrary, they used religious justifications to combat customary law. Unlike other Middle Eastern countries with smaller tribal populations, Saudi Arabia sought to combat customary law, rather than integrate selected positive elements. Furthermore, traditional elites were bound not by allowing them to practice their law, but by a meticulous system of patronage and marital relations between the ruling class and its subjects.

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The customary law of the Bedouins and other tribal groups is called *ʿurf*. The Arabic word translates “what is commonly known and accepted” and describes the judicial process based on legal narratives and analogies among tribal groups. Tribal groups, formally nomadic Bedouins, maintain adherence to this code of rules dating back to pre-Islamic times. It should also be noted that the terms Bedouin and tribal nowadays no longer refers to a certain lifestyle but to the acceptance of a special code of social values. Islamic law to a degree is based on customary norms as they were practiced in Arabia during the pre-Islamic time. The Prophet Muhammad, and later other legal scholars, legitimized the usage of those customs that did not contradict *Shariʿa* and incorporated them in the large body of Islamic law.

Among important aspects of tribal law that are inconsistent with *Shariʿa* are property law (tribal territories, or *dirah*), personal law (collective responsibility, marriage regulations), inheritance (women’s share), criminal law (murder, honor crimes), and conducting raids. While *ʿurf* stands for the nomadic, orally transmitted, and secular world of pastoral Bedouin tribes, *Shariʿa* is the agent for settled communities and states with their agricultural bases economy and divine, written codex.

Tribe and state, just like nomads and settlers, live in symbiotic dependency. If the state is powerful it can extend central authority into tribal territory and enforce *Shariʿa*. However, if the state is weak, tribal customs become widely accepted even among settled communities and their mostly tribal members. Another, more subjective aspect depicts this dichotomy. While adherence to Islamic law is a question of faith and believing in the revelation of the Prophet Muhammad, the adherence to customary law is a matter of following age-old customs and values.



In many legal cases the codified Islamic law is preferred over the orally transmitted customary law, because no relevant rules exist in *ʿurf*. The tribal law transmitted over generations however is able to deal with civil as well as with criminal cases (i.e. those cases related to all members of the tribe). Often, however, judges were confronted with the issue of how to deal with a legal system that seemed incompatible with Islamic law and that could not be abolished for practical reasons. Tribal judges on the other hand have the ability to establish precedent rulings, thus merging the legislation with the judiciary. Therefore, *ʿurf* and *Shariʿa* on the local level are considered part of a common frame with the ultimate goal not to rule by the book but with the intent to settle disputes based on reconciliation between the parties.

As a core principle, the government and religious elite in Saudi Arabia tried to dissolve tribal structures. But neither Islamic law nor state law did abolish the tribal system and law completely, although certain customs were successfully banned, such as infanticide, unlimited polygamy, and the worshipping of idols. In case of revenge killing, it only succeeded partially. However, limiting freedom of movement and action lead the tribes toward arbitration rather than revenge because major elements of *ʿurf* (asylum, affiliation with other tribe) no longer apply.

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**While over the last 30 years, political and religious elites were in a constant power struggle, tribal groups were able to gain ground on the social and judicial level.**

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Until today, customary law continues to be applied informally among tribal groups dealing with internal issues. The *shaykh* or a hereditary judge of a tribal group is called on to settle internal disputes. The basic principle of customary law is reconciliation offering reasonable compensation for the victim's side without humiliating the other. The blood relatives of both parties play an active part in the process. What is surprising is the level of involvement of high-ranking government officials and religious authorities in tribal cases. As mentioned earlier it spans from active participation as mediators to judges ruling according to customary law.

Currently, it seems that Saudi authorities use whatever legal system best serves their purpose, making them laws of convenience rather than laws of conviction. Whichever is the alternative, it is essential to have a legal system that is harmonious with the overall social contract and embodies acceptable solutions to legal problems. Here is the meeting point of the different legal approaches: The majority of Saudis continue relying on them, sometimes unconsciously, because they have worked. And if necessary, Saudi society is pragmatic — seeking and incorporating multiple legal solutions. While over the last 30 years, political and religious elites were in a constant power struggle, tribal groups were able to gain ground on the social and judicial level.

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# From Generation to Generation: The Succession Problem in Saudi Arabia

*Nabil Mouline*

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The question of succession is the core issue of contention among the members of the Saudi royal family. Ever since its advent in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the dynasty has been suffering from this problem and been trying to overcome it, succeeding as often as failing. This problem is due to the power structure inspired by the local system of kinship.

If the first Saudi state (~1744-1818) was characterized by a lineal-agnatic mode of succession,<sup>1</sup> which favored its stability and dynamism supported by the Hanbali-Wahhabi doctrine, the second state (1823-1891), which was founded on a more tribal base, adopted the adelphic mode of succession, which is very common in the region. According to this horizontal mode of bequeathing power, only the most powerful member succeeds to the throne. Thus, all of the lineage's dominant figures are peers between whom only ability and luck can decide.

This mode of succession is prone to making periods of generational transition a time of crisis, where specific lineages try to monopolize power, which often leads to confrontations. Conflict also takes place within the triumphant lineage itself. Repeated periods of crisis engender weakness inside the dominant group, which in turn weakens the political structure as a whole, facilitating foreign meddling and undermining the edifice of the state. In other words, the patrimonial state is a state whose coherence and very existence are brought into question with each generation.

The history of the second Saudi state reflects the troubles to which this adelphic mode of succession and patrimonialization of the state can lead. Assassinations (murder of the Princes Turki and Mishari), fratricidal struggles (wars between prince Faysal and his relatives, then between his sons after his death) as well as foreign interventions (the Ottomans and the al-Rashid) all characterize this period. Indeed, the succession crisis was the principal cause of the demise of the second Saudi state in 1889.

If King 'Abd al-'Aziz was able to restore his family to the throne in 1902, he did nothing to install a system of succession capable of protecting the Kingdom from fratricidal struggles during times of succession. Instead, he was concerned with eliminating other clans from competing with his sons, notably his brothers and cousins.



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1. Wherein power passes to the Monarch's younger brothers before passing to the Monarch's sons.

Even though he named his son Saud as his Crown Prince, King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz has installed a system that we can call “multi-domination” — investing several of his sons with power. Every one of them controls a sector of political, economic, or military activity in the Kingdom. In the medium term, this division of power would bring about a multiplication of centers of power. Furthermore, maintaining the adelphic system of succession has complicated intra-family power struggles, making all descendents of Ibn Saud powerful contenders for the throne, which would produce a political crisis when the moment of generational transition came (at his death, King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz left 34 sons).

The first years of the reign of Saud (1953-64) were marked by sharing power with different members of the family. Yet, he did not hesitate to resuscitate the old tradition of his family: excluding other branches of the royal family from power, replacing them with his own sons and clients. However, a coalition led by his Prime Minister and half-brother, Prince Faysal, supported by the *‘ulama’*, succeeded in overthrowing King Saud in 1964.

The reign of Faysal (1964-75) was marked by the consecration of the multi-domination. Since then, each Prince-Minister, Prince-Governor, as well as prince-CEO has possessed an unlimited power over his domain. Besides the dysfunctionality on the highest levels of the state and the pursuit of parallel and contradictory policies, multi-domination has favored the emergence of family factions as political power centers, as well as paving the way for the council of the royal family to become a center for decision-making. As a consequence, for the King to have a large margin of maneuverability, he needs to rely on a coalition of Princes controlling different sectors.

Thus, to support his policies, King Faysal relied mainly on the Sudayri faction, consisting of the seven full brothers: Fahd, Sultan, Nayif, Salman, ‘Abd Al-Rahman, Ahmad and Turki. The influence of this faction has grown without interruption, especially after the succession of its major figure Fahd to the post of Crown Prince in 1975, then to the throne in 1982 til 2005.

Although it appeared that the Sudayris were going to monopolize power and eliminate other branches, the second Gulf war, initiated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, upset this plan. In the course of this period of turbulence, King Fahd took a certain number of stabilization measures, one of which was the 1992 Basic Law of Governance. This law was the first official document to provide a legal framework for the question of succession, although in laconic and evasive terms.

Section B of the fifth article states that “power is transmitted [uniquely] to the sons of the founder King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. ‘Abd al-Rahmân Âl Sa‘ûd and his grandsons. The most capable amongst them is named [king].” This passage poses more problems than it solves. While the competition for power had, ever since the death of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, been limited to the 34 persons (the sons still alive) — which was very costly both politically and economically — King Fahd opened

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**Even though he named his son Saud as his Crown Prince, King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz has installed a system that we can call “multi-domination” — investing several of his sons with power. Every one of them controls a sector of political, economic, or military activity in the Kingdom.**

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it to numerous contenders. Thus, that first attempt, though timid, to codify the modalities of succession integrated the generation of the grandsons. This dispensation would exacerbate the tensions and augment the risks of conflicts in the long term by creating a congestion of the collateral branches of the family.

Without calling into question the preponderance of the Sudayri clan, the ten years of the semi-regency of Prince ‘Abdullah (1995-2005) permitted other clans to reenter the competition. Several factions would rally around the Crown Prince, aiming to thwart the hegemonic enterprise of Sudayris. This being said, the period was marked by a status quo power balance between the different factions.

‘Abdullah’s succession to the throne in 2005 has put an end automatically to the *modus vivendi*, which eventually revived struggles. First of all, these struggles crystallized around the nomination of a second deputy prime minister. According to the political tradition established in 1967, the holder of this title is considered second to the throne in the order of succession — that is to say, the future Crown Prince. Nonetheless, King ‘Abdullah, lacking the power to name a Prince of his choice, kept this office vacant, as the two primary candidates, Nayif and Salman, are Sudayris.

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**The institution aimed at perpetuating the mode of succession, passing the reins first to all the sons of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz before the advent of the generation of grandsons.**

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The success of this initial maneuver encouraged King ‘Abdullah and his allies to go further in their pursuit: to destroy the monopoly of the Sudayris in order to preserve the multi-domination system. Without entering in a direct confrontation with the adversary camp, which would achieve the preservation of the status quo at best (since the Sudayri-s control, among other things, the Ministries of Defense and Interior, as well as the Eastern Province, the region of Tabouk, and that of Riyadh), the King installed the Commission of Allegiance (*hay’at al-bay’a*) in 2006, responsible for naming, according to more or less precise modalities, the future sovereigns of Saudi Arabia.

If in the long run this commission is targeted at establishing an institutional framework to the problem of succession, its main function in the short term is to name a Crown Prince, making it complicated for the Sudayris to claim the position as well as ensuring a generational transition while maintaining the multi-domination system. In other words, the institution aimed at perpetuating the mode of succession, passing the reins first to all the sons of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz before the advent of the generation of grandsons.

While King ‘Abdullah was determined to put an end to the monopoly of the Sudayris institutionally, he has continued to reinforce his positions as well as those of his allies. The King has attempted at first to increase his efforts in the international domain, acquiring a maximum of symbolic resources (dialogue of religions, mediations between Palestinians as well as between the Iraqi factions, the G-20, different Arab summits, etc.) in order for him to be able to reinvest them internally.

In that regard, ‘Abdullah benefited from the deteriorating health conditions of his Crown Prince Sultan, who was con-

sidered by all observers to be on the verge of death in November 2008, as well as profiting from the disarray provoked by this event in the adversary camp, to fortify his position. He tried to place his men in important posts, limiting the influence of the Sudayris.

The ministerial reshuffle and changes in the religious institutions, the Council of Ministers, and the Consultative Council last February, follow a power struggle, rather than a reform, dynamic, as described by certain observers. Many examples support this hypothesis, such as the appointment of his son-in-law to the Ministry of Education, of the chief doctor of the National Guard, presided over by King 'Abdullah for almost 40 years, to the Ministry of Health, or of an adviser in the Royal Court to the new presidency of the Religious Police, among other examples.

Yet, 'Abdullah and his partisans have underestimated the capacity of the Sudayris, who control the most important institutions in the country, and have to cope with an unexpected situation. Against all expectations, Crown Prince Sultan has survived and is recovering, at least according to official statements. His full brothers, led by Nayif and Salman, have gone on the offensive. Spreading their propaganda (in the parts of the media that take their side), increasing political pressure (pointing to the spectrum of terrorism), as well as negotiating with the royal family, the Sudayris have gained a considerable landmark: Nayif was named second Deputy Prime Minister in March 2009. That is to say, he is the future Crown Prince.

Whatever the scenario, the question of succession remains problematic, and the fratricidal struggles threaten to escalate when the moment of generational transition comes. The Commission of Allegiance seems to be a tool (among many others) put in place to channel these struggles and preserve the multi-domination system, as well as to facilitate the transition to the second generation. However, the multiplication of contenders in the near future (with personal ties increasingly weakened), which implies a multiplication of centers of influence, cannot but fragment power, make difficult the process of decision-making, and handicap the functionality of the state. That being said, all measures taken by King 'Abdullah and his allies to perpetuate the multi-domination are unlikely to prevent the emergence in the medium term of a dominant lineage, probably a Sudayri lineage that would little by little monopolize power.

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# III. Regional and International Relations



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# Saudi Arabia: Victim or Hegemon?

George Joffé

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For the past 50 years, Saudi Arabia has been endlessly engaged in defending and expanding its position in the Middle East. This is, in part, a function of its self-image as the guardian of Mecca and Medina, the two holiest shrines in the Islamic world, but it also reflects its dominant role as the world's largest repository of oil and as one of its largest producers. Ironically, these two factors behind the Kingdom's foreign policy have made, at times, uncomfortable bedfellows, particularly when set against its domestic politics and foreign attitudes towards them. Yet, at the same time, one of these factors – oil – has also on occasion been the driver of the other.

## A CONSERVATIVE REGIONAL POWER?

Reluctant British support during the First World War had enabled 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Saud to construct the Kingdom as a political entity. However, it was American oil interest in the early 1930s and the explicit promise of American military protection in return for the free flow of oil, confirmed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt met the Saudi King at the Great Bitter Lake on the Suez Canal in mid-February 1945, that marked its advent as a regional power. For the United States, the Gulf, led by Saudi Arabia, was a "stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history," as an internal State Department memorandum expressed it in 1945,<sup>1</sup> which the United States would not ultimately allow any other power to control. Saudi Arabia became, in effect, one of the two pillars of American policy in the Gulf — alongside the Shah's Iran, which the Saudis saw as their rival — for much of the 1970s and 1980s.

For Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, the alliance meant that it, in turn, could resist other potential hegemonies in the Middle East such as Nasirist Egypt, which it forced into defeat and military withdrawal from Yemen in late 1967. Saudi support for Royalist forces there in the 1960s, who opposed Egypt's endorsement of and military aid for the Nationalist rebellion against the Imam highlighted an aspect of Saudi policy which has since become increasingly important. This was its essential conservatism, sustaining an established political order against the radicalism that the end of colonial domination in the region had introduced, despite the fact that it was a Wahhabist state. This, expressed as a commitment to Islamic orthodoxy as well as to established order, has been the bedrock of its approach to the wider world. It has, moreover, been successful in marginalizing radicalism



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1. Cited in Joe Stork, *Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 34.

in the region, at least until the new century dawned. Ironically, the policy has had a radical side as well, for Saudi Arabia was at the forefront of initiatives to revive Islam within Central Asia, even before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

#### THE ESSENTIAL AMERICAN ALLY

Despite American support for Israel, Saudi Arabia has seen this essential conservatism as part of its engagement in America's objectives for the region, at least up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, combining this wider engagement with its determination to act as the dominant power in the Gulf, it resisted Iraqi pretensions after both the 1958 Revolution and the Ba'athist coup ten years later which eventually brought Saddam Husayn to power. It also viewed with alarm the Iranian Revolution in 1979, concerned both about Iranian claims to revolutionary religious hegemony and about the threat this implied to American regional control. Yet, typically, when the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was created in 1980 as a mechanism designed to exclude both Iraq and Iran from regional security, Saudi Arabia saw the new organization as a vehicle for its own regional dominance — as it has now become in economic and political terms, even if its relevance to regional security was undermined by both the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) and the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Indeed, the 1980s saw the Kingdom and its American patron thrown ever closer together. By the time Washington changed its diplomatic posture towards Iraq in 1984, Saudi Arabia had become, alongside other Arab Gulf states, the paymaster for Iraq's military confrontation with Iran. The Kingdom also articulated its antagonism to the Soviet Union, whose ideology was based on atheism and socialist radicalism, through mobilizing support for the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion in 1979. With covert American financial and military support, Saudi Arabia encouraged tens of thousands of Muslims to join the ranks of the Afghan resistance, albeit with ultimately catastrophic consequences when committed Muslim extremists were dispersed throughout the Middle East after the Soviet withdrawal.

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**Saudi Arabia has taken a highly nuanced attitude to American experiences in Iraq.**

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Those consequences achieved their horrific apogee on September 11, 2001 with the al-Qa'ida attacks on New York and Washington. Immediately afterwards, relations between the two allies nosedived, as the American media and politicians held Saudi Arabia in some way responsible for these events, largely because a majority of those who had conducted the attacks turned out to be Saudis and because Wahhabism was held to predispose young Muslims to anti-American extremism. The coldness in relations was underlined two years later when Saudi Arabia failed to play a major role in the American-led invasion of Iraq, unlike the role it had played in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. At the same time, the United States took the opportunity to move its military command headquarters to Qatar. Since then, Saudi Arabia has taken a highly nuanced attitude to American experiences in Iraq and has not embraced the new government in Baghdad, largely because of the dominant role played by Iraq's Shi'a majority and Iraq's close relations with Iran.

#### THE CURRENT SITUATION

The distancing in US-Saudi relations continues, particularly after the accession of King 'Abdullah to the Saudi throne in

2005 — although he had been the effective leader of the country since 1996 when King Fahd suffered a disabling stroke. The new King is anxious to see an end to the chronic problems of the Middle East, chief among them the ongoing crisis with Israel. Therefore, in 2002 Saudi Arabia proposed a peace plan based on Israeli withdrawal to its 1967 frontiers and the creation of a Palestinian state — a proposal which received generalized support throughout the Arab world and, latterly, from the new Obama Administration. However, Saudi sensitivities towards the United States, inflamed after September 11, 2001, remain raw, and the Kingdom has not been prepared to facilitate American initiatives to bring Israel to the negotiating table by spontaneous concessions to the Jewish state.

Over the past decade, especially after the American-led invasion of Iraq and the ascent to power in Iran of radical conservatives around Mahmud Ahmadinejad, Saudi Arabia has become increasingly concerned about the threat of a new wave of radicalism in the Middle East. Together with Jordan and now with Egyptian backing, it has spearheaded the conservative response in what has been called the New Arab Cold War. This sets conservative and moderate states against the “Shi’a arc of extremism” — radicals such as Iran, Syria, the Hizbullah movement in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza (particularly after the latter’s electoral victory in January 2006). This has created some strange linkages, such as moderate reluctance to intervene in the crisis caused by the December 2008 Israeli Army invasion of Gaza, despite long-standing support for Palestinian aspirations. Now that Saudi Arabia’s relations with Syria have improved, perhaps these tensions will dissipate as well.

#### THE FUTURE

Much will depend on the attitude to be adopted by the Obama Administration towards Arab-Israeli peace and towards Iran, the latter now identified by Riyadh as its major regional challenge. Despite Iranian protestations that its nuclear plans are peaceful in nature, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies fear the implications of a new nuclear power in the region and are initiating plans for nuclear power of their own. At the same time, the Kingdom does not intend to knuckle under American demands for increases in oil production in order to force world prices down. Nor will it abandon its leading role inside OPEC or its uneasy partnership with Iran over the future of the global oil market which it forged in 1998 when the King, then Crown Prince, made the first high-level official Saudi visit to Tehran.

Now, 30 years after the Iranian Revolution that revived the rivalry for spiritual and political leadership in the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia still confront each other across the Gulf, divided by ideology but united by a shared concern over their control of oil and gas as the driver of the world economy. Both strive for the attention of the world’s sole hyperpower, despite its waning resources. Yet both are also distrustful of its embrace, one because of its revolutionary purity and the other because of the bruising consequences of radicalism at the start of this decade. However, since neither can embrace the other as an ally, both must seek external partners to give their hegemonic ambitions meaning. For Saudi Arabia, in short, the United States is the inevitable partner, whatever moral antagonism remains.

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**Over the past decade, especially after the American-led invasion of Iraq and the ascent to power in Iran of radical conservatives around Mahmud Ahmadinejad, Saudi Arabia has become increasingly concerned about the threat of a new wave of radicalism in the Middle East.**

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## Saudi Arabia and Iran: Less Antagonism, More Pragmatism

*Paul Aarts and Joris van Duijne*

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The siege of the Grand Mosque in November 1979 came on the heels of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Juhayman al-'Utaybi, the leader of the rebels, though, seemed not be very much inspired by what had happened next door. Whatever he may have noticed from Iran's turmoil — and it might not have been too much because he never watched TV and rarely browsed newspapers — he deemed it to be irrelevant because Iranians were Shi'ites, incorrigibly stuck in their heretic beliefs. It should, however, be noted that the 30-year period since the Al Saud faced the rebels in Mecca does correspond to the era in which it has had to deal with a revolutionary Islamic regime in its Shi'a-Persian neighborhood. The parallel stretches further than timing: in much the same way as the seizure of the Grand Mosque can be seen as a crisis of credibility for the Saudi royal family's role as the "legitimate protector of the holy sites, and Islam in general," the Islamic Republic presented similar challenges to this role conception. Arguably both of these events — and subsequent incidents and discussions — prompted King Fahd to change his title into "Custodian of the Two Holy Sites of Mecca and Medina" some seven years later. But close observation of these two challenges (domestic and foreign) today reveal a fundamentally different image: while the latter is virtually non-existent, the former has proven much more persistent and particularly problematic for the House of Saud (Bin Ladin, al-Khobar in 1997, and the events of 2003/2004 to name but a few examples). While the development of domestic Islamist challenges will be covered elsewhere in this volume, our aim is to shed some light on why the Iranian revolutionary credo has not developed into a persistent attack on Saudi credibility.

While the Saudi leadership initially, and typical of its non-confrontational and consensual political style, congratulated Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on his victory, it soon became evident that Saudi Arabia and Iran would be diametrically opposed during much of the 1980s. Khomeini labeled the Saudi regime as "puppets of the West" and "traitors to the cause of protection of the sanctuaries", while Saudi labels for the regime in Tehran included "agents of Satan," "a corrupt bunch of thieves" and "fascists." The downward spiral between the Kingdom and Iran was remarkable in its political consequences: while such accusations often remain ideological, this time they resulted in Saudi Arabia supporting Iraq in its war against Iran (1980-1988), frequent confrontations regarding the *hajj* (culminating in the violent clashes of 1987), and the virtual absence of diplomatic relations during much of this period.

But following this turmoil, a degree of pragmatism slowly evolved, pushing Saudi-Ira-



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nian relations into greater engagement rather than confrontation. It often has been suggested that the thaw in the bilateral relationship was due to the policies of both former President Muhammad Khatami and King ‘Abdullah. In fact, however, the *rapprochement* was initiated many years earlier. Even before the death of Khomeini, many in the Iranian establishment, including Hashemi Rafsanjani, opted for regional *rapprochement* (also in light of post-war reconstruction). Meanwhile, the Saudis felt more threatened by the triumphalism of Saddam Husayn, especially after his invasion of Kuwait, than by an Iran in ruins.

But while hostilities faded away, relations failed to improve beyond a limited degree of cautious pragmatism. The most persistent and obvious reason for this is the fact that Saudi Arabia and Iran have diametrically opposed relations with the United States: being in different global political camps hardly helps in developing friendly, neighborly ties. But there are other reasons as well. Mounting economic problems and fierce competition within OPEC during much of the 1990s also contributed to this limitation. Some would point to sectarian differences — the fact that Saudi Arabia is Sunni and Iran is Shi’a — though we question the impact of this because sectarianism and ideology mostly shape relations, but do not define them.

While, until now, the main factor influencing bilateral ties (relations with the US) has remained unchanged, there have been significant changes in Gulf affairs that influence Saudi-Iranian relations. First, of course, is the toppling of Saddam Husayn from power, which, at least for the near future, significantly altered the power balance in the Gulf. In this context, but also more generally speaking, the impact of “Sunni-Shi’a rivalry” is again too often mentioned in analyses. It should be noted that since the launching of the war against Iraq in 2003, and in particular during Mahmud Ahmadinejad’s presidency, the Islamic Republic has pursued an explicitly nonsectarian public diplomacy toward Arab audiences. Looking at Iran’s two most prominent foreign policy issues, the Palestinian cause and confronting Washington’s hegemonic schemes in the region, there surely is nothing particularly “Shi’a” about them. In this respect, one could even argue that Iran’s foreign policy is “Sunni.” Riyadh realizes this and acts accordingly by, at least sometimes, distancing itself from Washington, thereby trying to regain credibility in the vital fight against Tehran for Arab hearts and minds. Instead of focusing on so-called “sectarian” battles, it is relevant to notice that Iran and Saudi Arabia share a vested interest in a stable, unified, peaceful but not too strong Iraq and thus both still recognize the need of the earlier established bilateral pragmatism.

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Another significant shift is in the economic realm. While Iran is still experiencing much the same economic difficulties as during the 1990s, Saudi Arabia has been able to develop a large industrial sector in mainly carbon-based fields such as petrochemicals and fertilizers. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, unlike Iran, has proven able to attract large scale and long-term foreign investments for these sectors and is investing its petrodollar surpluses increasingly intra-regionally. While Iran is still in dire need of such investments, it has one particular commodity that it can offer to the Saudis: natural gas.



Iran holds some 15.5% of the world's proven reserves, but has particularly low production rates. It needs capital and expertise to boost this production. Riyadh, on the other hand, will increasingly experience a shortage of natural gas (unless large gas fields will be found in the Rub al-Khali, which at present seems unlikely), particularly for the above-mentioned development of its petrochemical sector. There is room for an economic *quid pro quo*: Saudi investments in return for natural-gas supplies.

It is unlikely that this economic “marriage” will be consummated any time soon. Counter-intuitively, however, what might bring it closer to fruition is a thawing of relations between Washington and Tehran. Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states realize that the United States needs Iran to play a constructive role in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Arab-Israeli arena. More importantly, the nuclear dossier is high on the agenda, and needs to be tackled in an even-handed way. Instead of fearing an eventual US-Iranian strategic collusion, coming at the expense of Saudi Arabia, there are policy choices for Riyadh to mitigate the notion of a supposedly negative “*fait accompli*.”<sup>1</sup> What we might envisage, after an American-Iranian *rapprochement*, is a new kind of triangle between the United States, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. This triangle — a more balanced and more harmonious one than in the recent past — would be predicated on the abandonment of the two-against-one logic that has persisted for so long. Saudi interests would best be served if those involved took all these considerations into account, both the positive and the negative. While it is easy to fear Iranian or even “Shi’a dominance,” it is more fruitful to imagine what a less isolated Iran would look like and what the potential benefits of normalizing relations might be.

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1. For an elaboration on this, see Paul Aarts and Joris van Duijne, “Saudi Arabia after US-Iranian Détente: Left in the Lurch?” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2009), pp. 64-78.



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# How Salafism Came to Yemen: An Unknown Legacy of Juhayman al-‘Utaybi 30 Years On

Laurent Bonnefoy

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Since it emerged in Yemen around three decades ago, the country’s Salafi movement has maintained complex, if not tense links with Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup> Before establishing a Yemeni manifestation of Salafism with its own features and clerics, Muqbil al-Wadi‘i (d. July 2001), a tribesman from the highlands of Sa‘ada in North Yemen, had been educated in the 1960s and 1970s in the main Saudi religious institutes (including the famous Islamic University of Medina). Throughout his time in the Saudi Kingdom, al-Wadi‘i had become an important actor in the *Jama‘a al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba* movement, whose offshoot led the 1979 uprising in Mecca.<sup>2</sup> Due to his personal relations with Juhayman al-‘Utaybi and his alleged influence on the latter’s writings — particularly his famous letters questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy — al-Wadi‘i had been expelled from Saudi territory a few months prior to the *Ikhwan* rebellion in the Great Mosque. Back in Yemen, he established his own teaching institute in the outskirts of Sa‘ada city: Dar al-Hadith, which rapidly became successful, attracting many students from Yemen and abroad, including Europe and America.



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Despite numerous invitations by renowned scholars during the 1980s and 1990s and possible funding of the Salafi institutes by Saudi individuals and institutions, al-Wadi‘i only agreed to return to Saudi Arabia just before his death to receive treatment and officially reconcile with the Saudi rulers.<sup>3</sup> This final reconciliation came as a surprise to many, as it appeared to contradict much of the position on the Saudi regime that the Yemeni cleric had taken for most his life. To seal such an apparent renunciation, al-Wadi‘i was buried in Mecca close to the graves of the great Saudi ‘ulama’ Abd al-‘Aziz bin Baz and Muhammad al-‘Uthaymin.

While other mechanisms, notably transnational proselytism and a shift in religious identities, obviously played a central role in the development of Salafism in Yemen, Muqbil al-Wadi‘i’s eviction in the late 1970s and the Meccan uprising both appear as decisive events that have long shaped the specific doctrine of Yemeni Salafism. Indeed, repres-

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1. Laurent Bonnefoy, “Salafism in Yemen: A Saudisation?” in Madawi al-Rasheed ed., *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia’s Political, Religious and Media Frontiers* (London: Hurst, 2008), pp. 245-262.

2. Thomas Hegghammer and Stephane Lacroix, “Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman al-‘Utaybi Revisited”, *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2007), pp. 97-116.

3. Muqbil al-Wadi‘i, *Mushahadaï il al-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Sa‘udiyya* (Sanaa : Dar al-athar, 2005).

sion of the Salafis by the Saudi government at that time durably affected al-Wadi'i's relation to politics and reinforced his criticism of the Saudi leadership. Over time, these two features have been the main hallmarks of the Yemeni brand of Salafism and have contributed to its success beyond its borders. Al-Wadi'i's brutal eviction justified in his own eyes his condemnation of Saudi policies and contributed to his image as an uncompromising scholar. Despite his own ambiguities when it came to criticizing the Yemeni regime, such independence from the Saudi monarchy appeared particularly appealing to activists who disregarded the endorsement of certain Saudi policies (e.g., the presence of American and allied troops during the Gulf War in 1990-91 and afterwards) by prominent clerics such as 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz, Mufti of the Kingdom.

When recalling his relationship with al-'Utaybi, al-Wadi'i asserted that while he disagreed with the *Ikhwan*'s strategy and the fact they had taken weapons inside the Meccan shrine (something that was explicitly forbidden by Islamic jurisprudence), he felt that it was the Saudi government's repression that should be blamed, as violence by al-'Utaybi and his supporters only came as a reaction to arrests and torture carried out by the government.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, al-Wadi'i, in his various books and conferences, appeared to remain consistent with key elements of the *Ikhwan*'s doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Although the messianic dimension of al-'Utaybi's enterprise and the importance of the *mahdi* do not appear as central for its activists, the Yemeni Salafi movement first built around Muqbil al-Wadi' shared much with the Jama'a al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba. The fact that al-Wadi' was accused of being the ghost writer of Juhayman al-'Utaybi's letters reinforces the impression of such doctrinal proximity and might explain the features of Yemeni Salafism. Indeed, criticism of the Saudi state as expressed in al-Wadi'i's writings during the 1980s and early 1990s echo much of al-'Utaybi's argument in his 1978 letter, "The State, Allegiance and Obedience," in which he argues that the Al Sa'ud are illegitimate, as they are not from the Quraysh, and accuses them of being Christian allies.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, he writes, despite their corruption, Saudi rulers, like all Muslim leaders, are not to be excommunicated: *takfir* is thus forbidden. Furthermore, al-Wadi'i's extreme social conservatism — his rejection of pictures, music, and his claim that it was illegitimate for someone to work as a civil servant or to serve in the Yemen army — as well as some unorthodox interpretations of the texts (for instance, he claimed that it was possible to pray whilst wearing shoes<sup>7</sup>) were all consistent with al-'Utaybi's doctrine.

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In a way, the Yemeni branch of Salafism nevertheless seems to have learned from al-'Utaybi's mistakes and adopted a clearer stance towards loyalty to the ruler, particularly the Yemeni leadership, thus escaping from potential repression and abandoning revolutionary plans. Instead of directly confronting the ruler, al-Wadi'i considered that it was neces-

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4. Muqbil al-Wadi'i, *Ijâbat al-sâ'il 'alâ ahamm al-masâ'il* (Sanaa: Maktabat al-athariyya, 2004).

5. Muqbil al-Wadi'i, *Al-Makhrâj min al-Fitna* (Sanaa: Maktabat al-athariyya, 2002).

6. Muqbil al-Wadi'i, recorded conference, *Al-ilhad al-Khumayni fi Ard al-haramayn* (no date).

7. François Burgat and Mohammed Sbitli, "Les salafis au Yémen ou ... la modernisation malgré tout," *Chroniques Yéménites*, No. 10 (2003), pp. 123-152.

sary to be loyal to the political system in order to prevent the country from falling into chaos. He then asserted that state policies could be oriented through the secret advice of *'ulama'* to the rulers.

Muqbil al-Wadi'i's death in July 2001 and his fresh reconciliation with the Saudi authorities, along with political developments linked to the "global war on terror" in Yemen, led to a kind of normalization of the Salafi movement in that country. Most of its leading figures — Yahya al-Hajuri, Muhammad al-Imam, and Abu al-Hasan al-Maribi — appear to have abandoned along the way some of the specificities of "muqbilian"-style Salafism. They have done so either by adopting a more conventional apolitical stance that is reminiscent of the doctrine of the *'ulama'* of the Saudi religious establishment or by growing more and more political and being influenced by the Sahwa movement or even the Muslim Brotherhood. In a way, this whole and complex normalization process meant abandoning much of the heritage of Juhayman al-'Utaybi, therefore ending a cycle and obliterating the indirect influence that the *Ikhwan* movement has had on Yemeni Salafism.

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# Saudi-Russian Relations: 1979-2009

Mark N. Katz

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In 1979, Saudi-Russian relations were extremely poor. The two countries did not even have diplomatic relations — nor had they since the 1930s. Many observers regarded Soviet military support for Marxist regimes in Ethiopia, South Yemen, and Afghanistan as ultimately aimed at surrounding the oil-rich Kingdom and bringing about the downfall of its US-allied ruling family. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the uncertainty about whether the Iranian Revolution might evolve in a Marxist direction only served to intensify the perception of a Soviet threat to the Kingdom.



By 2009, though, Saudi-Russian relations have grown as friendly as they have ever been. Moscow long ago stopped supporting a network of Marxist revolutionary regimes or intervening militarily in the vicinity of Saudi Arabia. There have been a series of high-profile visits by senior leaders of the two countries, including one by then-Crown Prince ‘Abdullah to Moscow in September 2003 and another by then-President Vladimir Putin to Riyadh in February 2007. The Kingdom even hosted the Kremlin-appointed strongman in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, in 2007 and 2008. In addition, Lukoil and other Russian firms are now operating in Saudi Arabia. A significant trade relationship has developed between the two countries. There also have been many reports about how Riyadh may soon start buying weapons from Russia.

This improvement in Saudi-Russian relations, though, was quite slow in coming. Despite the overall improvement in Moscow’s ties with the West that occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev, Saudi Arabia and the USSR did not restore diplomatic relations until after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. Despite superficially improved ties in the early 1990s, Saudi-Russian relations deteriorated again by the mid-1990s. Riyadh grew concerned about Russian arms sales to Tehran as well as support for Iran’s atomic energy program (which many feared would lead to its acquisition of nuclear weapons). For their part, Russian officials and commentators openly accused Riyadh of supporting the Chechen rebels and of seeking to spread “Wahabism” among Muslims in Russia and other former Soviet republics. The countries also had competing interests in the oil sphere: Russia sought to increase both its production and exports, while Saudi Arabia wanted Russia to join, and abide by production limits set by, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

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By the time of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, Saudi-Russian relations had grown very tense. President Putin’s reaction to 9/11 was not only

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to seize this as an opportunity to improve Russian-American relations, but to encourage Americans to see themselves as being in a common struggle with Russians against what Moscow portrayed as Saudi-backed Sunni terrorists. However, by 2003, Russian-American and Saudi-American relations had begun to deteriorate, as both Moscow and Riyadh opposed the launching of the war in Iraq. Over the course of 2003, Saudi-Russian relations improved, culminating in the visit of Crown Prince ‘Abdullah to Moscow in September of that year. Many observers now saw Putin as attempting to ally with the Kingdom against the United States.

Perhaps a more important contribution to the improvement in the Saudi-Russian relationship than their common opposition to US policy toward Iraq was the switch made by Riyadh from criticizing to actually supporting Moscow’s policy in Chechnya. Especially after the 2003 al-Qa’ida-launched attacks inside Saudi Arabia, Moscow and Riyadh appeared to increasingly recognize each other as allies against a common enemy. The dramatic rise in the price of oil throughout most of the 2000s also helped to ease Moscow-Riyadh tensions over Russian oil production levels.

Some feared that improved Saudi-Russian relations at a time when Saudi-American relations were strained could lead to Riyadh seeking more security assistance from Moscow and less from Washington. This, however, has not happened. The Saudis have no illusions about Russia being able to replace America as the Kingdom’s principal defender. Nor does Moscow appear to seek this role. Despite the sharp deterioration that has occurred in Russian-American relations, Moscow seems to recognize that the continued close Saudi-American security relations actually benefit Russia. Moscow simply is not in a position to defend the Kingdom — or Russia’s growing economic interests there. Further, Moscow recognizes that the most likely replacement for a government in Saudi Arabia that is closely allied to the United States is not one that is closely allied to Russia, but a radical Islamist regime that is as virulently hostile toward Russia as it is toward the West.

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But while there has been a dramatic improvement in Saudi-Russian relations since 2003, there are also important differences between the two countries. Moscow is frustrated that Saudi Arabia has not awarded contracts to more Russian firms to operate inside the Kingdom. And despite all the media reports over the last few years that the Kingdom is about to place large orders for Russian arms, it has not done so. The Saudis, for their part, are unhappy about the role Russia continues to play in providing both arms and nuclear know-how to Riyadh’s regional rival, Iran. According to some Russian press reports in 2008, Riyadh has linked Saudi arms purchases from Russia to Moscow distancing itself from Tehran. Prime Minister Putin, though, made clear that this was not something Russia would do. Each side appears to hope that the other will back down, but so far neither has.

In addition, the decline in the price of oil from the dramatic high it reached in mid-2008 has resulted in renewed tensions over Russian oil production levels. Moscow has hinted that it “might” join OPEC, but has not actually done so. In

March 2009, influential Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin told a meeting of OPEC ministers that Moscow might send a permanent representative to the OPEC Secretariat — a step that is clearly far short of Russia becoming a member and abiding by OPEC production limits.

Finally, if the recent increase in Muslim insurgent activity in the North Caucasus continues, this could sour Saudi-Russian relations. Unable to acknowledge that harsh Russian government policies and xenophobic Russian popular attitudes toward Muslims are contributing to the upsurge of violence in the North Caucasus, Russians are likely to revert to blaming “outside forces,” including Saudi Arabia, regardless of whether such blame is justified. Still, it is possible that the situation in the North Caucasus will not deteriorate, or that Saudi-Russian relations will not suffer even if it does — especially if Riyadh continues to express support and understanding for Moscow’s efforts to deal with domestic terrorists (as Riyadh has done in recent years). There may be a limit, though, to the extent that Riyadh can do this, especially if sympathy for the Muslims of the North Caucasus grows in the rest of the Muslim world.

Thus, while relations between Saudi Arabia and Russia have grown friendlier since 2003, there are important differences — either active or latent — between them that serve to limit how close their ties can become. Though Moscow and Riyadh are not hostile toward one another, as they had been in 1979 and continued to be for many years thereafter, they have not become allies. Nor are they likely to.



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# Cooperation under the Radar: The US-Saudi Arabian Joint Economic Commission (JECOR)

*Thomas W. Lippman*

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Economists and political analysts who write about Saudi Arabia often say that the most difficult part of their research is finding accurate statistics about the Kingdom. Population, food production, water resources, oil and gas reserves, industrial output — many kinds of data that are essential to sound planning and accurate evaluation cannot be taken at face value, especially if they are generated by Saudi government agencies.

The reasons for the statistical imprecision vary from department to department. In an environment where the government is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the ruling family and there is no accountability to the public or any elected body, statistics may be manipulated for political reasons. Some of the data anomalies arise from a lack of coordination between different government departments. The most important numbers of all, oil production and crude oil reserves, are probably accurate, but they are entirely under the control of Saudi Aramco, the state oil company, and the Ministry of Petroleum — making them impossible to independently verify.



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When I was reporting from Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s as regional correspondent for *The Washington Post*, this state of affairs was taken for granted. Drowning in a Niagara of oil cash, Saudi Arabia was growing at a rate that far outstripped its administrative capabilities. That it is still true to some extent today represents, in an odd way, the failure of a novel — and little-known — US government initiative.

By the late 1970s, American civil servants (employees of the US federal government) were ensconced in several Saudi government departments instructing their counterparts on how to conduct the public's business in a modern state.

In 1979, a 28-member team from the US Census Bureau was teaching the Saudis methods of statistical compilation, under a ten-year, \$36.5 million contract. Other Americans were providing instruction in financial data collection, agriculture and water research, accounting standards, banking methods, and “applied research capabilities.” Statisticians trained at the University of Maryland were teaching the Saudis how to compile a consumer price index and take an accurate census. Throughout the Saudi government, Americans were like evangelists, preaching the importance of accurate data.

The Americans understood that accurate statistics are essential to a modern state. Al-

location of resources for housing and education, development planning, agriculture and water planning and economic analysis depend on them. But to the Saudis of the 1970s, these functions were understood only dimly, if at all.

Saudis now remember 1979 as a difficult year because of distressing political events at home and overseas: the Iranian Revolution, the extremist takeover of the Great Mosque in Mecca, Shi'ite rioting in the Eastern Province, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But at the same time, Saudi Arabia in 1979 was becoming unimaginably wealthy. The country literally had more money than it could spend because of the great oil price surge that began with the Arab embargo of 1973-74, which sent the Kingdom's revenue skyrocketing.

At the beginning of the decade, in 1970, Saudi crude oil had sold for \$1.39 per barrel. By January 1974, the price was \$8.32. The price kept rising throughout the decade, eventually reaching \$32, and state revenue rose with it because consumers kept buying anyway. The Saudi government's annual oil income, less than \$4 billion a year early in the decade, would peak at almost \$102 billion by 1981. The government undertook giant infrastructure projects all over the country, but still the cash flowed in faster than it could be spent.

The Americans who were seconded into the Saudi government were there as part of a grand design engineered by William E. Simon, President Richard Nixon's last Treasury Secretary, to channel as much of that money as possible back to the United States. Simon was Deputy Secretary until he was promoted into the top job on May 8, 1974 — just three months before Nixon's resignation in the Watergate scandal. He stayed on as Secretary under Nixon's successor, Gerald R. Ford.

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Despite the distractions of Watergate, the spring of 1974 was a crucial period in US-Arab relations. Agreements negotiated by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his famous "shuttle diplomacy" had ended the hostilities of the 1973 war and stabilized the battlefields of Egypt, Syria, and Israel. The United States restored diplomatic relations with Egypt. With the end of hostilities, the Arab oil producers, led by Saudi Arabia, ended their wartime embargo on exports to the United States. In that newly favorable atmosphere, Nixon embarked on a last-hurrah trip to the region. While in Saudi Arabia, he agreed to the creation of a US-Saudi Arabian Joint Economic Commission, known as JECOR. This was Simon's brainchild.

JECOR's mission was twofold: first, to teach the Saudis — who had no tradition of organized public agencies — how to operate the fundamental bureaucracy of a modern state; and second, to ensure that all the contracts awarded in pursuit of that mission went to American companies. JECOR would operate for 25 years, channeling billions of Saudi oil dollars back to the United States, but would attract almost no attention in this country because Congress ignored it. The Saudis were paying for it, so there was no need for US appropriations or congressional oversight.

The Commission's objectives were listed in a joint statement issued by the American and Saudi officials who created it: "Its purposes will be to promote programs of industrialization, trade, manpower training, agriculture, and science and technology." The participating Saudi government agencies would be the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and National Economy, Commerce, and Industry, and the Central Planning Organization, soon to become the Ministry of Planning. On the US side, the managing agency was Simon's Treasury Department, not the Agency for International Development, because it was not a traditional foreign aid program — it was a money-management program.

Given the novelty of the arrangement and the complexity of the programs to be undertaken, it took some time for JECOR to become fully operational. By 1979, with Jimmy Carter in the White House, the Commission was in high gear.

Each day some 250 American civil servants — GS-9s and 11s — seconded by their departments at home would go to work in their counterpart agencies in Saudi Arabia, sitting with Saudi colleagues, offering tutorials, advice, and the knowledge of their experience. They worked, in English, from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., the Saudi government work day, then went back to the JECOR office to write reports and supervise the translation of documents. The office was not part of the US Embassy because it was an arm of the Treasury Department, and the JECOR team often made a point of keeping the Embassy uninformed.

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By 1979, JECOR was not just providing instruction but taking on the management of specific projects, such as the creation of a national network of vocational training schools and even the development of the country's first national park, in the Asir region of the mountainous southwest. Those were missions the Saudis understood and appreciated; the compilation and distribution of statistics was another matter.

The government objected, for example, when an America-designed plan for creating a consumer price index included the price of gold as one of the commodities to be measured. The Saudis thought it would be politically ill-advised to flaunt their wealth by including gold, even though it was a staple of family wealth. Saudis whom the Americans were training in census techniques had a different problem: there was no credible or socially acceptable method of tabulating female citizens.

Three decades later, Saudi Arabia is by all technological measurements a fully modern country, and the Saudis no longer need the type of instructional input they were getting in 1979. JECOR went out of business, with no formal announcement by either country, at the end of Bill Clinton's presidency. The JECOR teams accomplished a great deal in terms of bringing the instruments of government in Saudi Arabia into the modern world of nation-states; but reliable statistics are still sometimes elusive, which should not be surprising considering the numbers are controlled by officials who have an interest in what they show.

Earlier this year, for example, Patrice Flynn, a labor economist working at Effat University in Jeddah, wrote a brief essay on the labor market for the US-Saudi Arabia Business Council, a private group. How many Saudis are working? How many are unemployed? What are the figures for women? How many foreign workers are there? She drew two conclusions: “It depends on the year” in which the statistics were compiled, and “It depends on the data source” because the numbers issued by different departments often cannot be reconciled.

The Saudis have begun preparations for a new nationwide census in 2010. The announced results of all previous censuses have been greeted with skepticism by demographers and economists outside the Kingdom. If the new one fares better, JECOR’s lessons will finally have been absorbed.

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# Saudi-American Relations

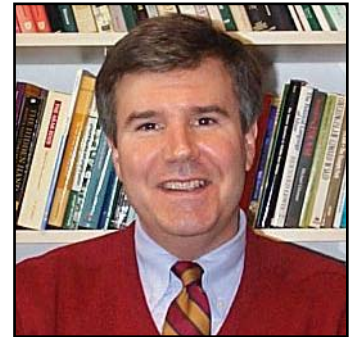
*F. Gregory Gause, III*

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The past 30 years of the Saudi-American relationship have seen highs of intense geopolitical cooperation and the lows of the post-September 11, 2001 period. What has tied those ups and downs together is the fluctuating relationship between both governments and the transnational Salafi Islamist movement. Both governments fostered the movement — domestically in Saudi Arabia and as an international force — during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Both have seen the movement shift from a tool of their foreign policies to a threat. Ironically, this common sense of threat, which was not clear immediately after the 9/11 attacks, helped Washington and Riyadh to restore some equilibrium to the bilateral relationship.

The Iranian Revolution presented the United States and Saudi Arabia with a common enemy. At the time, US and Saudi leaders thought that Saudi Arabia's role in the Sunni Muslim world could be a useful ideological counter to the revolutionary and anti-American Shi'i Islamist platform put forward by the new regime in Tehran. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to the Muslim world that the Saudi version of Sunni Islam could mobilize transnational support as well, in a cause that was both consistent with American Cold War strategy and a challenge to Iran's claim to Muslim leadership. Mobilizing Salafists appeared to offer both sponsors far greater benefits than risks: The Saudis had based their domestic legitimization strategy upon Salafism/Wahhabism for centuries, and had used Islam more generally as a counter to Nasser's Arab nationalism in the 1960s, while the United States had seen Islam as a Cold War ally, despite the anti-American turn in revolutionary Iran.

In hindsight, however, it is clear that Saudi and American leaders should not have been so sanguine about their ability to channel and control transnational Salafi Islamism. The takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Juhayman al-Utaybi and his followers, in retrospect, was a warning shot across the bow of both governments. Al-'Utaybi criticized the Saudis for their laxity and their close relations with an "infidel power" (i.e., the United States) in terms that would echo in the pronouncements of Usama bin Ladin in the 1990s and 2000s. At the time, however, the tendency was to dismiss the takeover as a fringe manifestation of Muslim millenarianism, and certainly no reason to reassess the strategy of mobilizing Sunni Salafism and kindling the spirit of jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan.



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The strategy worked — at least when viewed from the 1990s. Soviet forces were driven out of Afghanistan; the Iranian revolutionary momentum was blunted (as much by Saddam Husayn in the Iran-Iraq War as by anything else, though both Saudi Arabia and the US helped him); the Cold War was won by the Americans, with support from their friends in Riyadh and elsewhere.

The Gulf War of 1990-91 was the high point of Saudi-American cooperation. Using the military and civilian infrastructure built by Saudi petro-dollars and American construction companies in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States deployed a force of half a million troops to Saudi Arabia, sufficient to turn back Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and restore the Persian Gulf *status quo*. Only in retrospect can we see that these two great successes of Saudi-American strategic cooperation laid the foundation for the 9/11 attacks.

The spirit of Salafi jihadism ignited by Afghanistan and focused on the United States (at least in part) by the 1990-91 Gulf War, which came to be personified by Usama bin Ladin, was an inconvenience and an irritant in the Saudi-American relationship in the 1990s, but not a major issue. The Saudis suppressed domestic Salafi opposition voices which were raised during the Gulf War, but chose not to take on the more general phenomenon of transnational Salafi jihadism, which found recruits and funding within the Kingdom. They tried, instead, to channel it into what Riyadh saw as relatively innocuous fronts: Bosnia, Chechnya, and back to Afghanistan. The political cost of confronting Salafi jihadism directly — ideologically and organizationally — was too difficult politically. It would have entailed the formidable task of redefining Salafism at home, which had come to be tightly entwined with the idea of jihad, and thus potentially disruptive to the institutions and the ideas of Wahhabism, which had been a pillar of the regime's stability.

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After al-Qa'ida's bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Salafi *jihadist* issue began to cause tensions in the Saudi-American relationship. With the 9/11 attacks, it became the central issue in the greatest crisis the relationship experienced since the 1973-74 oil embargo, if not since the inception of the relationship. The United States expected the Saudi leadership to conduct a searching self-examination about its ideological, organizational, and financial role in the development of Salafi jihadism (conveniently avoiding any public self-examination about its own role in the process). The Saudis went into a defensive crouch, denying any connection between the Kingdom and Usama bin Ladin, his ideas, or his organization. While it was clear that the Saudi government had had nothing to do with the attacks themselves, Riyadh's unwillingness to confront its indirect role in the development of bin Ladin's movement inflamed American public opinion. Saudi public opinion, never particularly pro-American because of the Arab-Israeli issue, among other things, reacted very negatively to the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These were the makings of a serious rift, if not a rupture in the bilateral relationship.



Yet, such a rupture did not happen, for two reasons. First, in 2003 al-Qa'ida began a campaign in Saudi Arabia itself against the regime. The 2003 terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, more than those of 2001, mobilized the Saudi regime to take an active role in confronting the Salafi jihadist movement. The highest profile element of that campaign was a security offensive that started out haltingly but eventually succeeded in taking the fight to its domestic Salafi opponents. Less noticed in the United States was the sustained ideological effort by the regime to delegitimize bin Ladin's ideas. The Saudis not only mobilized the official religious establishment, but also were able to rally a number of Salafi critics — some who had spent time in jail in the 1990's — to the regime's side. With this new commitment to confront Salafi jihadism domestically came greater cooperation with the United States on intelligence sharing and steps to dry up the sources of financial support for jihadist groups.

The second reason that the relationship survived the post-9/11 crisis was the perception by leaders in both countries that geopolitical interests necessitated their continued close cooperation. Had the US war in Iraq succeeded in establishing a stable, secure, and pro-American Iraqi government, perhaps Washington might have been able to put some distance between itself and Riyadh. But with Iraq a mess and Iran a continuing challenge to American power and goals in the region, the US could not afford a further deterioration of its only working relationship with a major Gulf power. The run-up in oil prices from 2003 to 2008 also brought home to Washington the American interest in good relations with Saudi Arabia — the Organization of Oil Producing Countries' (OPEC) dominant player and the world's leading exporter of oil. Meanwhile, in the upheaval of the post-9/11 Middle East, with war and chaos in Iraq and the concomitant increase in Iran's regional power, the Saudi leadership almost by instinct suppressed its misgivings about many Bush Administration policies (including the gentle but real pressure in 2004-05 for domestic political reform) and sought security in its historic refuge — its relationship with the United States. Both King 'Abdullah and President George W. Bush took political risks (in terms of their respective domestic public opinion) to maintain the relationship during this difficult period.

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If the 9/11 crisis did not fundamentally change the Saudi-American relationship, it is hard to imagine what would. During this tumultuous period, it was the recognition by both Washington and Riyadh of the existence of, and the need to confront common enemies — especially Salafi jihadism — that undergirded and ultimately sustained the relationship. And cooperation to thwart common enemies is likely to continue to be the key factor in bolstering the relationship in future.

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# Saudi Wahhabi Islam in the Service of Uncle Sam

Askar H. Enazy

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In various entries in his unpublished diaries, British Mesopotamian officer Harry St. John Philby, on special mission to central Arabia during 1917-1918, recorded the minutes of his many private “interviews” with Ibn Saud. He concluded that the newly re-emerging Wahhabi movement under Ibn Saud would, with British political and military support, effectively serve British military and political objectives in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond during the ongoing war and in its aftermath. Three decades later, with British power receding and the United States ascendant in the Middle East, a new patron-client relationship was forged between the West and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. “Our faith and your iron” was how Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, described in 1946 the new post-WWII American-Saudi client relationship in a conversation with Colonel William A. Eddy, the first US Minister to the Kingdom. This relationship remains intact — despite, or perhaps because of, the rise of Salafist militancy that US and Saudi policies purposefully and unwittingly nurtured.

## IBN SAUD AND SAUDI WAHHABISM

Contrary to much of the current literature on the Kingdom, which essentially regards the creation of modern Saudi Arabia as the result of an aggressive Wahhabi ideology espoused by a politically ambitious, if not religiously inspired, Ibn Saud, a close investigation of the available documentary evidence shows that the territorial expansion of the Saudi state between 1914 and 1927 was the outcome of the implementation of Britain’s imperial policy to achieve its military and political objectives in the Middle East. The personality of Ibn Saud and Wahhabism both served as the instruments to pursue these objectives. The expansion was initiated at the conclusion of the Anglo-Saudi protectorate treaty of 1915, and ceased formally and permanently with the signing of the 1927 Treaty of Jeddah, which granted Ibn Saud a quasi-independent state with borders not of his own choosing, and which, with subsequent minor amendments, constituted the permanent political boundaries of present-day Saudi Arabia.

Ibn Saud lacked either political ambition or religious zeal; his motivation was primarily defensive, preservationist, and in complete conformity with the acquiescent, essentially non-expansionist nature of Wahhabism. Due mainly to Wahhabism’s dogmatic and austere nature at the domestic social level, many scholars have failed to appreciate the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes Wahhabism from mainstream Sunni



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Islam with respect to the notion of jihad and relations with the outside world. While classical Sunni Islam defines jihad in terms of offensive warfare directed at the non-Muslim world, Wahhabism views it in defensive terms, directed principally against non-Wahhabi Muslims, and restricts its declaration and conduct to the ruler, to whom obedience is absolute. The strict and intolerant conditions imposed on its followers, combined with its hostile, often aggressive, attitude towards non-Wahhabi Muslims, contrast sharply with Wahhabism's pragmatic, and even benevolent attitude towards non-Muslims. This attitude is illustrated by the staunch, consistent pro-Western foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar (the other Wahhabi state). It also is illustrated by the total absence of any public manifestation of popular anti-Western opposition, even with regard to the all-important issue of Palestine. The link between "Wahhabi Islam" and both the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1980s and September 11, 2001 originated in the early 1950s. The onset of the Cold War led to the slow though steady transformation of traditional Wahhabism.

#### THE INTERNATIONALIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF SAUDI WAHHABISM

Due to its anti-atheistic and pro-capitalist tenets, Islam in general and Saudi Islam (Wahhabism) in particular became an effective tool in US foreign policy in combating pro-Soviet and anti-Western secular and nationalistic ideologies in the Middle East and the Muslim world at large. In pursuing its Cold War agenda in the Middle East, the United States supported the creation of ideologically motivated regional groupings such as the Muslim World League in 1962 (to replace the ill-fated Baghdad Pact), the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in 1969, and the Islamic Development Bank in 1976 — all headquartered in the Saudi province of Hijaz, the home of Islam's holiest sites. The United States also supported the importation *en masse* into Saudi Arabia of a large number of Islamist political activists, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoot, *hizb al-tahrir* (the Party of Liberation), who had fled the secular, pro-Soviet regimes in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria. The late Saudi King Faysal, the main architect of the pro-Western Islam-inspired policy in the Middle East, put these Muslim *émigrés*, assisted by some influential scholars from Pakistan, in charge of all levels of the Saudi educational system. It is they who, while paying lip service to Wahhabi rituals, penned a manifesto declaring the ultimate target of Islamization to be all facets of knowledge and professional activity. Officially renamed the Educational Policy of Saudi Arabia, the manifesto was adopted by the Saudi government in 1971 and implemented immediately. This policy, which remains in force, has not just shaped the education of Saudi students, but also millions of non-Saudi children and youths who began to flock to the country beginning in the mid-1970s. As a result, Wahhabism itself has been gradually transformed — subject to the influence of aggressive and intensely political religious ideologies from Egypt and Pakistan that had their origins in Salafism.

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The internationalization of Wahhabism obliterated the sacrosanct notion of absolute obedience to the ruler and, more importantly, expanded Wahhabism's inherently hostile attitude towards non-Wahhabi Muslims, to include non-Muslims and non-Muslim powers (i.e., the Soviet Union and the West). By the late 1970s, the internationalization of Wahhabism had led to the emergence of a new generation of Muslims espousing a form of highly politicized Islamic fundamentalism that might be called "Wahhabi Salafi Islam" — Wahhabi in outward appearance (i.e., in manner of dress, long beard, anti-smoking and anti-music) but adherent to the militant strands of Salafi Islamic ideology as represented in the writings of the Pakistani Abu A'ala Maududi and his Egyptian disciple of Indian descent, Sayyid Qutb. Until shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the writings of these two Muslim scholars in particular were required readings at all levels of Saudi education. These writings, along with highly sanitized edited versions of other Wahhabi and Sunni scholars, were published in many languages and distributed freely worldwide by the Saudi government.

For some years, Islam, and Wahhabi Salafi Islam, in particular, capably served Western strategic interests and, by default, the interests of their Saudi and other regional allies (e.g., Iran and Pakistan) in the struggles against revolutionary regimes in the Arab and Muslim world such as Nasserist Egypt, Ba'thist Syria and Iraq, and socialist Algeria and South Yemen. The most striking example of this service occurred in the planning and execution of the policy response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution. While the US supplied the arms and training in camps inside Pakistan, Saudi Arabia provided the money and, more importantly, transported from all over the world, free of charge, thousands of mostly young, indoctrinated Saudi and non-Saudi volunteers seeking martyrdom. The base camp (*al-qa'ida*) where they reported upon arrival and from which they departed for battle in Afghanistan was run by young Usama bin Ladin, who supervised the reception, housing, and training of these *mujahidin* fighters.

Those who fought Soviet forces and later conducted deadly attacks in the US, Europe, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere were young men of middle and upper class families, either Saudi citizens or non-Saudis who were born, raised, and educated in Saudi Arabia or otherwise indoctrinated in the tenets of Wahhabi Salafism in Saudi government-sponsored schools and institutions worldwide. Many of the fighters in present-day Iraq and Afghanistan are incredulous Saudis seeking martyrdom in order to meet the heavenly virgins promised to them. Other such indoctrinated young men are greatly coveted as would-be suicide bombers by various political factions and state security institutions across the region (including the Syrian and Iranian intelligence services) seeking to advance their own agendas.

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With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989 (for which both the US and Wahhabi Salafis claimed credit), the United States was free to pursue its interests worldwide. However, Saddam Husayn's vows to acquire nuclear weapons

and wipe half of Israel off the map, followed by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and possible march on Saudi Arabia in 1990, posed a serious threat to US strategic interests in the Middle East. For their part, Wahhabi Salafis (by then well organized, well trained, and well financed) had become a worldwide movement, proclaiming aloud what they had been taught and believed in all along — that the crusading West was irreligious, materialistic, decadent, and bent upon destroying Islam; and that Western powers had succeeded in colonizing Muslim countries and planting the Jewish state of Israel as their agent in Muslim Palestine. Thus the two former allies found in each other, out of expediency if not ideology, the enemy for which each had been searching since the demise of the Soviet Union.

In the late 1990s, Bin Ladin, as the leader and main financier of the movement, moved his base (*al-qa'ida*) to Afghanistan. With the traditional Wahhabi notion of absolute obedience to the ruler no longer sacrosanct, the overthrow of the pro-Western, traditional Wahhabi-based regime in Saudi Arabia became not only permissible, but, as Bin Ladin declared, obligatory. In 1998, he declared war on the US and regional allies. Soon afterwards, his organization carried out the September 11 attacks on US soil and, later, deadly, though less spectacular, attacks, in Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, and other countries. The September 11 attacks provided the US government with the moral and legal rationale needed, with the active assistance of both the Shi'ite Islamic Republic of Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia, to realize its long-cherished, if not planned, strategic and economic objective of removing Saddam from power by (falsely) linking the Iraqi regime to Bin Ladin. These momentous events, if anything, appeared to enhance the close and sometimes cozy relationship between the ruling House of Saud and the George W. Bush Administration.

## CONCLUSION

Today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is still Wahhabi and remains, as it has been since its formal establishment in 1932, the staunchest pro-Western and pro-American Arab-Muslim client state in the Middle East. Meanwhile, however, Wahhabi Salafism persists while its pool of expendable foot soldiers is replenished. This dichotomy's effects continue to reverberate across the region and influence policymakers around the world.



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# The United States and Saudi Arabia: Challenges Ahead

Rachel Bronson

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The Obama Administration confronts a vexing set of challenges across the greater Middle East, an area that stretches from Egypt in the west, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east, Central Asia in the north and Yemen in the south. In the midst of this “arc of instability” sits Saudi Arabia, a long-standing partner whose relationship with the United States has been enduring but fraught.



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That Saudi Arabia will play a role in shaping the future of the greater Middle East is not new. Both Democratic and Republican administrations, over time, have come to recognize the influence that the Kingdom exerts on the region. This was most clear in the period following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, which shifted the regional balance of power against US and Saudi interests. Throughout the 1980s, the two worked together, at first quietly, and then more visibly, to roll back Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and Iranian ventures throughout the Gulf and in Iraq. The United States and Saudi Arabia sided against Iraq, following the latter country's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Although recent US administrations have been increasingly involved in the Middle East, and worked alongside the Kingdom, few of them have understood as early as the Obama Administration the centrality of the Middle East in general, and the importance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular, for advancing American interests. President George W. Bush did not visit Saudi Arabia until the last year of his second term, and then he visited twice. President after President, administration after administration has come to office defining the Middle East as a second- or third-level priority, situated somewhere behind transatlantic or US-Asian relations. However, almost without fail, every recent American administration has realized that the future of peace and stability, and the advancement of American interests, requires a serious focus on the greater Middle East.

The Obama Administration is well ahead of its predecessors in engaging the greater Middle East. Given the challenges the United States now confronts, the administration was fast out-of-the-gate looking for ways to engage the region. Only three days after his inauguration, the President appointed Richard Holbrooke as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and George Mitchell as special envoy for the Middle East, conveying a seriousness of purpose about engaging the region. Within a week of as-



suming office, President Obama gave his first interview to the foreign press and chose the Arab station al-Arabiya as his preferred outlet. This decision was celebrated across the Arab world.

Also early in his presidency, President Obama reached out directly to Saudi Arabia. In his al-Arabiya interview, the President referred to King ‘Abdullah’s contributions to the peace process as “courageous.” In April 2009, the President met with King ‘Abdullah of Saudi Arabia at a G-20 meeting, and then traveled to Riyadh, “the place where Islam began,” a few weeks later, prior to his highly visible address in Cairo. In April 2009, at a conference on US-Saudi relations, Ambassador William J. Burns, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, stated clearly that “few countries in the world today matter more to American interests than Saudi Arabia.” The greater Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular is receiving considerable attention from this Administration.

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**Ambassador William J. Burns, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, stated clearly that “few countries in the world today matter more to American interests than Saudi Arabia.”**

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The reasons for this are clear. Saudi Arabia is involved in, or has influence over, countries and issues that are foremost on Obama’s global agenda. These include:

- **Afghanistan and Pakistan:** President Obama campaigned on the argument that Iraq was the wrong war, and Afghanistan the right one. The President has empowered a new team to try to win back territory from the Taliban, and cut off the assistance it has been receiving across the Pakistan border. Riyadh has long-standing ties to both countries, and particularly close ties with Pakistan’s defense community, and parts of its leadership.
- **Iran:** Iran’s nuclear program is a key concern for the Obama Administration. Although the Saudi leadership is also focused on Iran’s nuclear program, it is Iran’s more general hegemonic ambitions that occupies Saudi decision-makers. One senior Saudi recently confided that Iran “feels it has been kept away from the leadership role that it deserves. These feelings in such an important country are dangerous.” Saudi leaders have been exploring arrangements with China and Russia that, in the future, could increase its leverage over the Islamic Republic.
- **Iraq:** One of the President’s first foreign policy decisions was to not only continue but also accelerate the drawdown of US troops in Iraq. Riyadh has close ties to many within Iraq’s Sunni community and is concerned that a premature withdrawal will result in increased chaos.
- **Peace Process:** The Obama Administration is investing significant political capital early in its tenure to restore stability and confidence within the Palestinian leadership, between that leadership and Israel, and among Israel and its neighbors. At the same time, the Saudis have been encouraging reconciliation between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, an effort that has limited US support.

• Counterterrorism: Terrorism is a global challenge and Saudi Arabia has an important role to play. Al-Qa'ida is largely financed by monies from individuals in, or passing through, the Gulf states. Disenchanted Saudis have surfaced in Iraq and elsewhere in meaningful numbers. The US administration is closely involved with some of Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism efforts, and is watching carefully a rehabilitation program that has been introduced in Saudi prisons.

• Engaging the Muslim world: President Obama's speech in Cairo, and his prior speech in Ankara, made it clear that he viewed the precipitous drop in public opinion in the Muslim world toward the United States as a strategic threat. The home of Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia has a unique platform from which it can speak to and for the broader Muslim world.

• Stable Oil Markets: The global economy will remain dependent on fossil fuel for the foreseeable future. Sitting astride one-quarter of the world's proven oil resources, Saudi Arabia plays a key role in pricing and the global energy market.

For the most part, Saudi Arabia and the United States define the regional challenges similarly, although Saudi Arabia's list would also include Yemen and Iran's involvement there as a major foreign policy challenge. The geopolitical lens that Riyadh and Washington share goes a long way toward explaining why the relationship has endured for so long. The Saudi list of concerns is, and has long been, similar to that of the United States.

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**As far as Riyadh is concerned, past American policy has increased instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, empowered Iran throughout the region, and has resulted in religious parties coming to power through local elections in Palestine, an outcome Riyadh did not welcome.**

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Nevertheless, Riyadh and Washington differ, often widely, on preferred strategies. For example, Riyadh was not supportive of the American decision to significantly reduce forces in Iraq, believing that the decision was premature and would contribute to further chaos. At the same time, Riyadh is deeply concerned about the American decision to surge forces into Afghanistan. The Saudi regime also has been quite vocal in its critique of the administration's approach toward the Israelis and Palestinians.

This gap between preferred approaches to the region has become more pronounced in recent years, and represents one of the Obama Administration's greatest challenges. As far as Riyadh is concerned, past American policy has increased instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, empowered Iran throughout the region, and has resulted in religious parties coming to power through local elections in Palestine, an outcome Riyadh did not welcome.

In private conversations, influential Saudis make clear that they believe that increasing US forces in Afghanistan will only result in more death and further instability. On the Administration's Palestinian policy, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faysal made abundantly clear that the Kingdom did not support the administration's approach. Sitting beside US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Saudi Foreign Minister unleashed a hard-hitting critique that caused the press corps

to acknowledge “the foreign minister’s very strong opposition,” and that “the differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia are fundamental on this issue.”

As it continues to work through its broad, and at times conflicting interests in the greater Middle East, Washington will need to spend considerable time working through how to better align US and Saudi approaches to this important region. US decision-makers will need to identify priorities and begin developing a strategic framework for moving forward. The Obama Administration has made a strong start in reaching out early to the region in general and to the Kingdom in particular. But after years of frustration, the Saudis have lost confidence in American leadership abilities, and this is a reality that the Obama Administration must acknowledge and manage. The relationship is strained and has reached yet another juncture where serious realignment is necessary. Future progress toward peace and stability in the region depends upon it.

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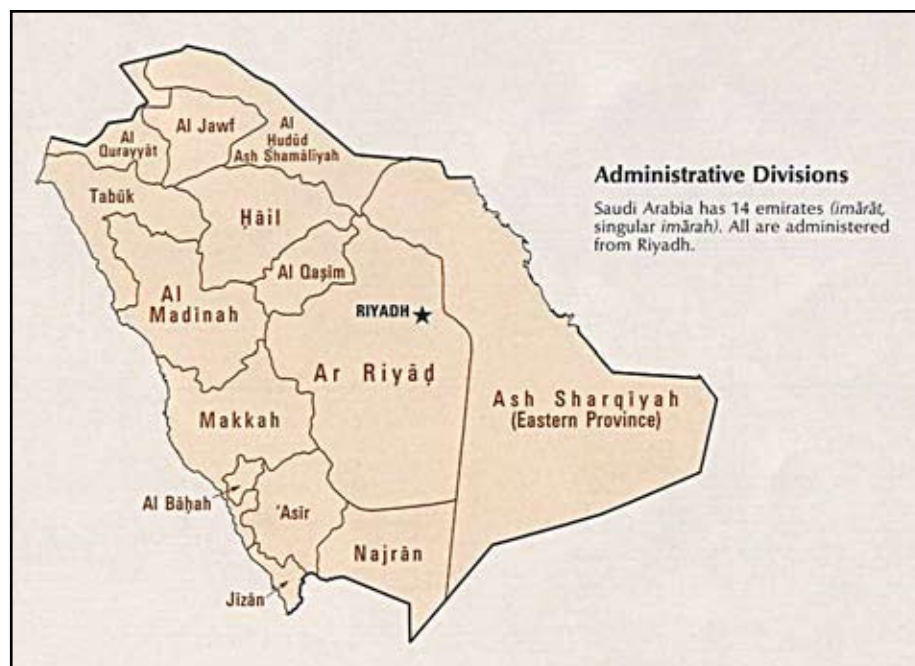
# Maps



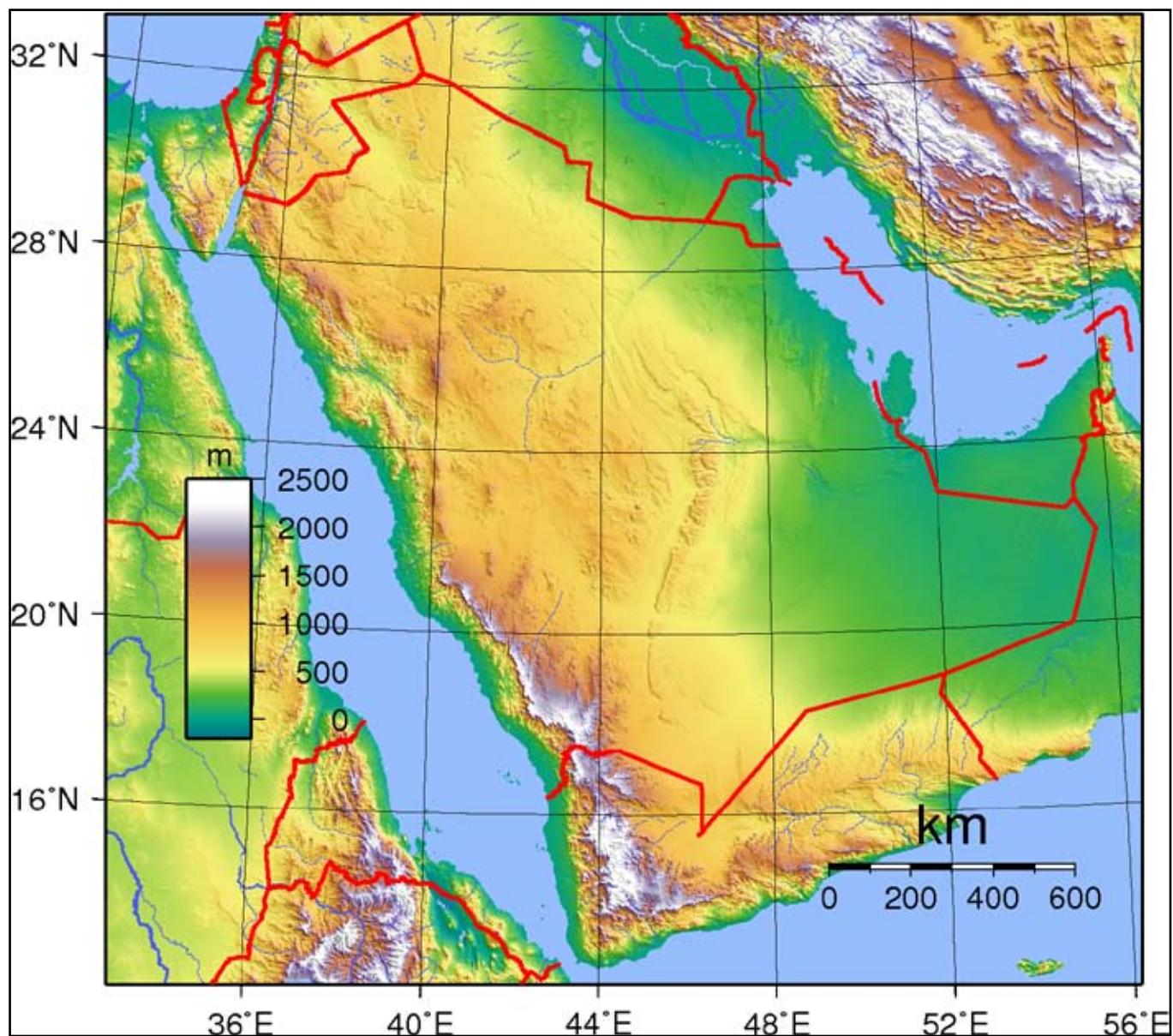


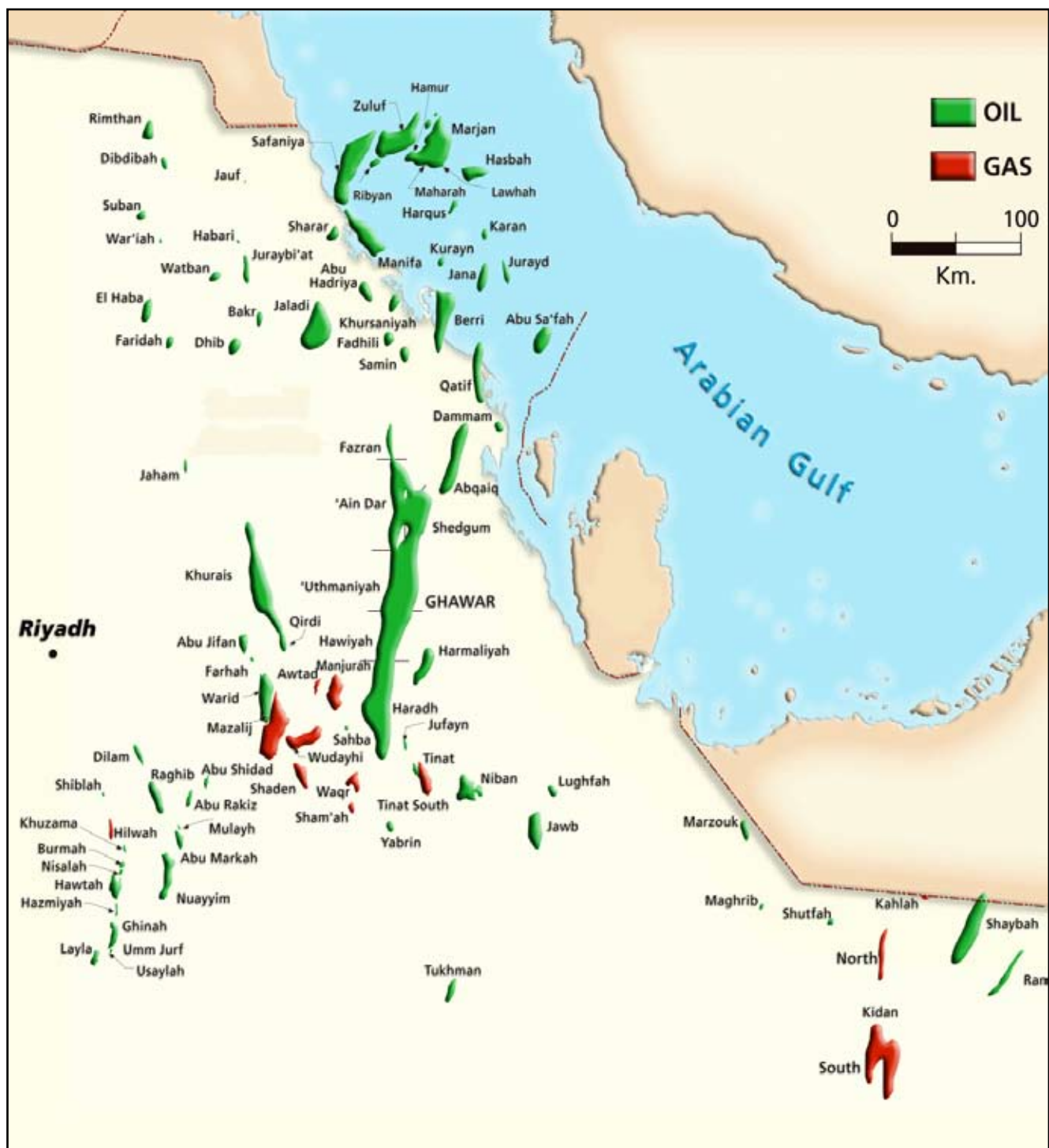
All statistics are from the US government unless otherwise noted.













## Mecca 1946

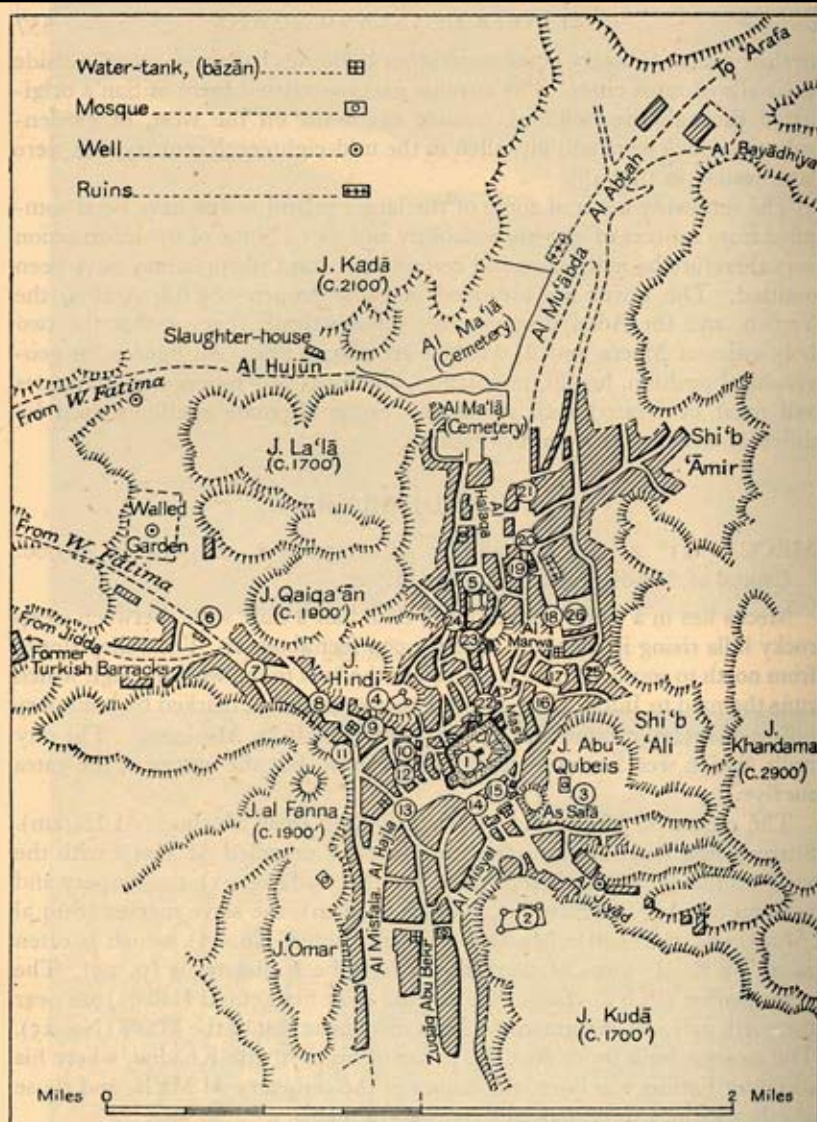


FIG. 41. Plan of Mecca

Heights in feet above the central valley are approximate

- |                      |                         |                            |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Al Haram          | 10. Donkey-drivers' inn | 19. Al Jaudhariya          |
| 2. Qal'a Jiyād       | 11. Graveyard           | 20. Sūq al Habb            |
| 3. Masjid Bilāl      | 12. Zuqāq as Suwaq      | 21. Al Ma'la               |
| 4. Qal'a Jebel Hindi | 13. Sūq as Saghir       | 22. As Suweiqā             |
| 5. Qal'a Filfil      | 14. Al Hamidiya         | 23. Al Qarāra              |
| 6. Sheikh Mahmūd     | 15. Egyptian kitchen    | 24. Al Falq                |
| 7. Jarwal            | 16. Al Qashāshiya       | 25. Prophet's birthplace   |
| 8. Hārat al Bab      | 17. Sūq al Leil         | 26. Former Sharif's palace |
| 9. Ash Shubeiqā      | 18. Al Ghazza           |                            |

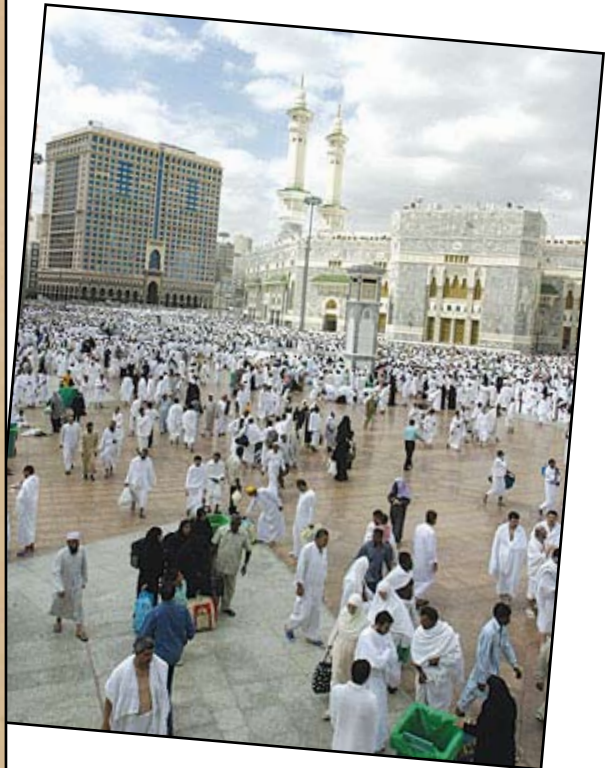


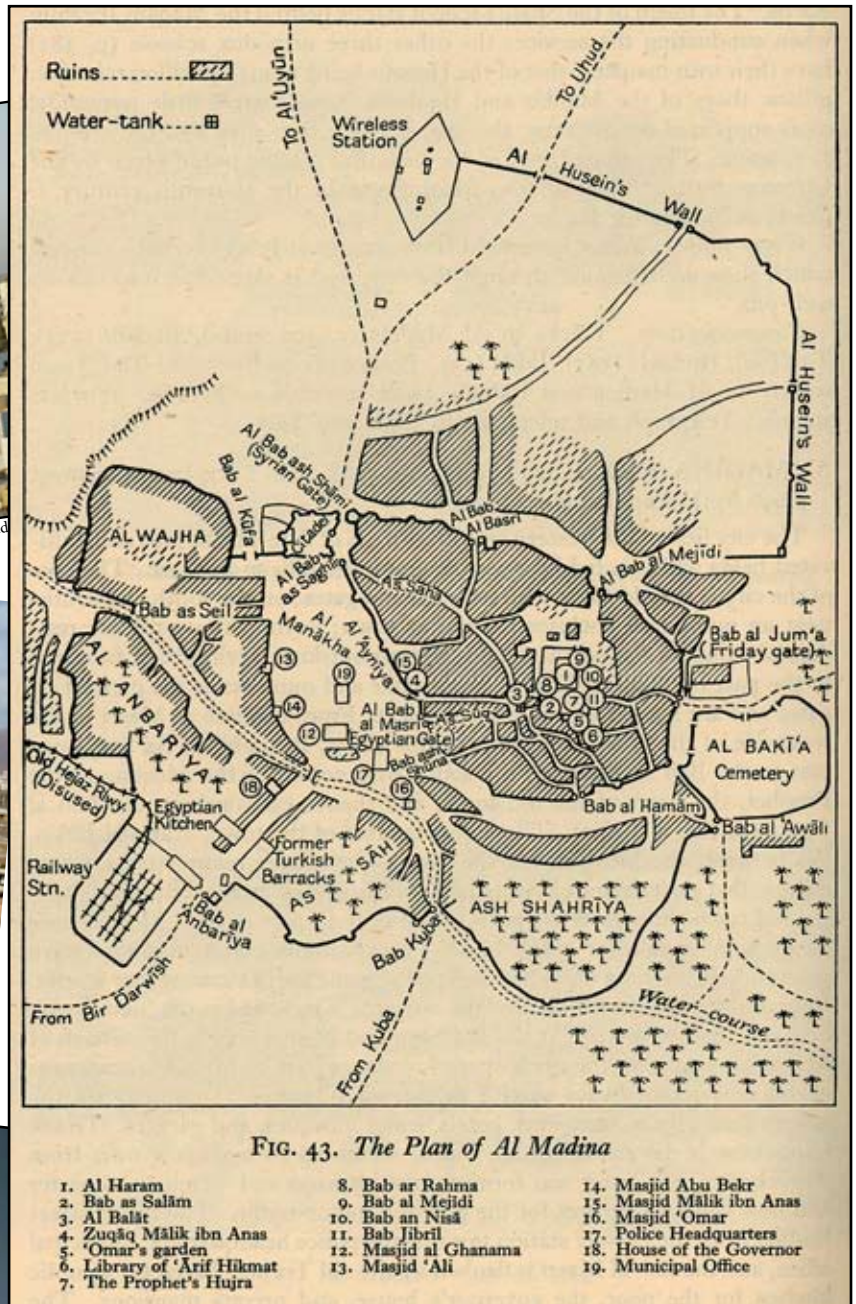
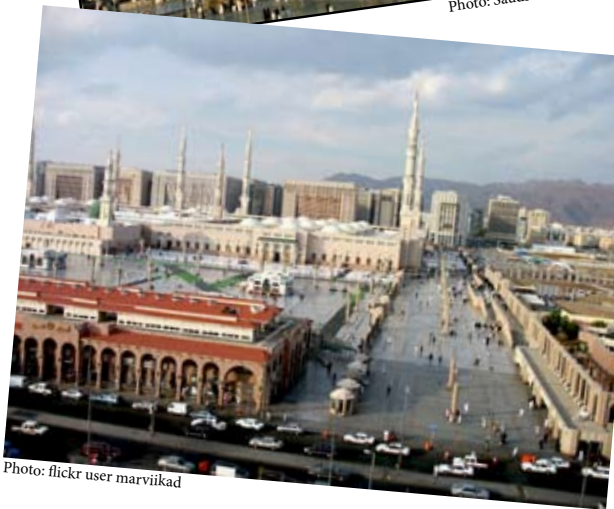
Photo: flickr user Saeid.Y, Google Earth



Photo: Ali Mansuri



## Medina 1947





## Riyadh 1946

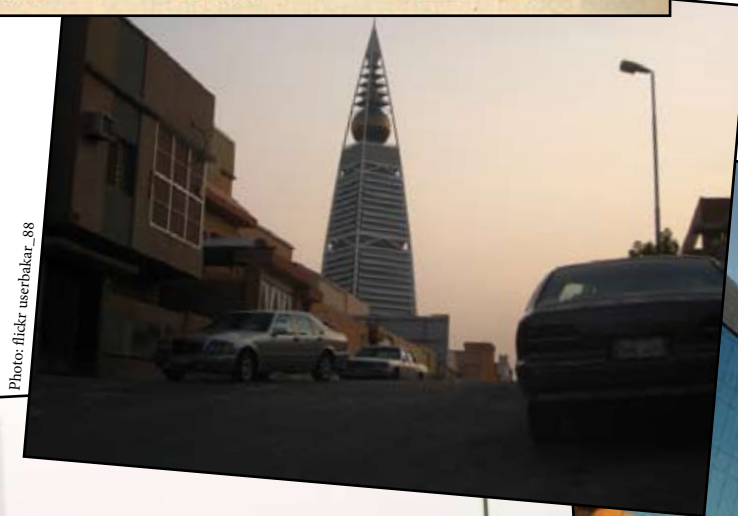
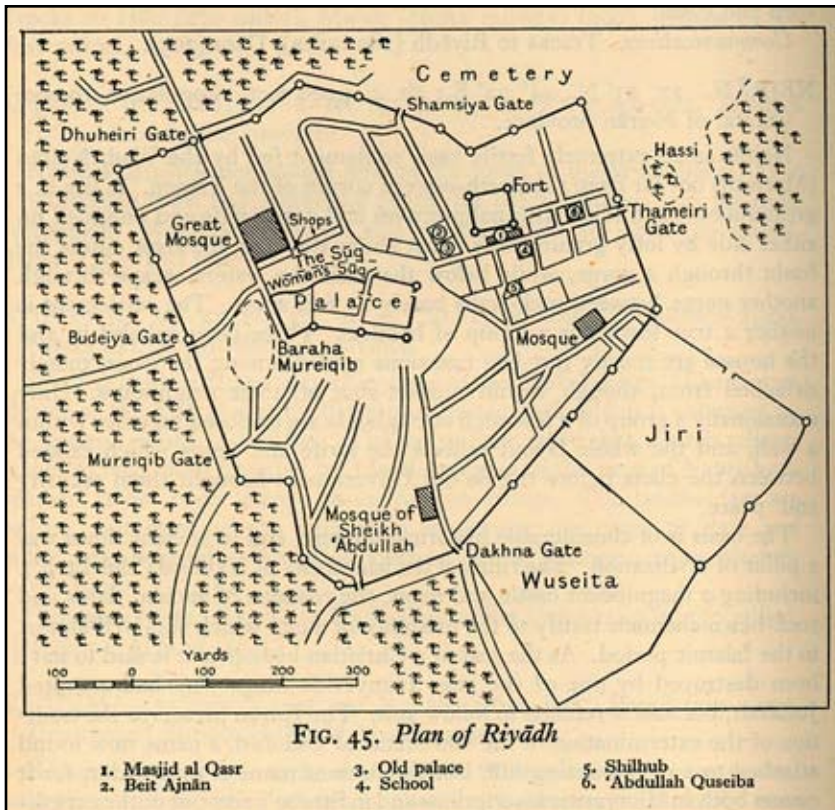


Photo: flickr userbakar\_88



Photo: flickr user jonrawlinson



Photo: Ameen Mohammad

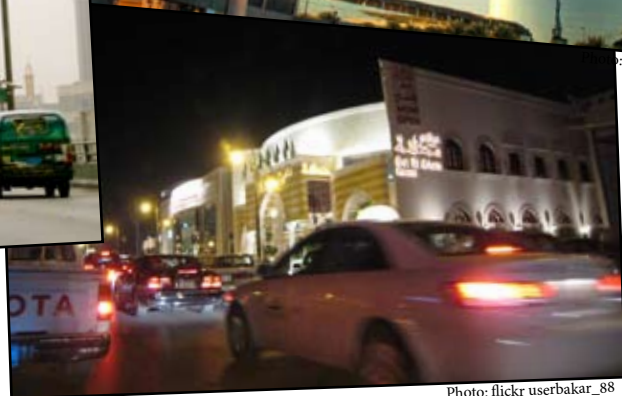


Photo: flickr userbakar\_88

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# **From the pages of *The Middle East Journal's* “Chronology:” Saudi Arabia, 1979**



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Since it began publication in 1947, each issue of *The Middle East Journal* has contained a section chronologically detailing events of note in the region for the preceding three months. Today, this section is dubbed the “Chronology,” although in the earliest issues of the *Journal*, it was called “Developments of the Quarter.” The Chronology is organized by country and issue, with each section providing a day-by-day account of the relevant events and developments. Mirroring the *Journal*, the Chronology’s coverage of the region spans from North Africa in the west, to formerly Soviet Central Asia, to Pakistan in the east.

Given the longevity of *The Middle East Journal*, the Chronology is an indispensable resource to those interested in the politics and history of the modern Middle East — in the pages of the *Journal*, readers can essentially read a daily accounting of the events in a particular country from 1947 through today. Entries for the Chronology are written as they occur and represent a real-time window not only into the events of the region, but into the overall context of the time and place in which they occurred.

The following pages contain reproductions of the Chronology entries written for Saudi Arabia during 1979. They provide a unique and detailed look into a series of events that have left an indelible mark upon the region.

## Oman

(See also, Bahrain, Yemen)

1978

*Dec. 11:* Yemeni President 'Alī 'Abdallāh Šālīh arrived in Muscat and met with Sultan Qābūs bin Sa'īd. [FBIS]

*Dec. 19:* Kuwayti Crown Prince Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallāh Āl Šabāh was in Muscat for talks on "consolidating bilateral relations." [MEED]

1979

*Feb. 4:* Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Qays al-Zawāwī met Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Sa'ūd al-Fayṣal in Saudi Arabia and then returned to Oman. [AN]

*Feb. 3:* Police arrested supporters of Bhutto in a nationwide sweep. [WP]

*Feb. 6:* The Supreme Court upheld the conviction of Bhutto by a vote of 4 to 3. [NYT]

The US State Department said that President Jimmy Carter had asked Pakistan to spare the life of Bhutto. [NYT]

*Feb. 9:* Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev and Pope John Paul II appealed to Pakistan to spare the life of Bhutto. [NYT]

*Feb. 10:* New penal measures based on Islamic principles of justice went into force. [AN]

*Feb. 11:* Chinese Premier Hua Kuo-feng appealed to Pakistan to grant clemency to Bhutto. [NYT]

*Feb. 13:* Lawyers for Bhutto filed a request for a stay of execution. [NYT]

*Feb. 14:* The Supreme Court granted a 10 day stay of execution in order to consider a request to reconsider its decision concerning Bhutto. [NYT]

## Pakistan

(See also, Afghanistan, Iran, United Arab Emirates)

1978

*Nov. 18:* A court ordered the government to release Nusrat Bhutto, wife of former President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, from house arrest. [NYT]

*Dec. 15:* Commerce Minister Mian Zahid Sarfraz returned to Rawalpindi at the end of a visit to Kabul. A communiqué said that Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed in principle to set up a joint ministerial commission on bilateral trade. [FBIS]

*Dec. 17:* *The New York Times* reported that the government had lifted censorship imposed 2 months earlier on 8 periodicals in Sind province. [NYT]

*Dec. 18:* Former Premier Bhutto appeared before the Supreme Court to appeal against his conviction on murder charges. [FBIS]

Bhutto said he was being "persecuted" in his jail treatment and appealed for justice to the Supreme Court. [NYT]

*Dec. 21:* Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mohammad Shamsul Haq met with President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan. [FBIS]

1979

*Jan. 22:* Chinese Deputy Premier Li Hsien-nien pledged China's support of Pakistan against any "foreign aggression" and said China "firmly supports" Pakistani demands for "self-determination" in Kashmir. [NYT]

*Jan. 25:* Malaysian Premier Datuk Hussein Bin Onn arrived in Islamabad on a 4 day official visit. [FBIS]

*Jan. 29:* UAA President Zāyid bin Sulṭān Āl Nuḥayyān met with President Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan. [FBIS]

## Qatar

(See also, Saudi Arabia)

1978

*Dec. 12:* Kuwayti Crown Prince Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallāh Āl Šabāh ended a visit to Doha during which he had held talks with Amir Shaykh Khalīfah bin Ḥamad Āl Thānī. [FBIS]

*Dec. 17:* Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko arrived in Doha and met with Amir Shaykh Khalīfah. [FBIS]

*Dec. 24:* The following were appointed to the Cabinet: Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ḥamad Āl Thānī: *Education*; Shaykh Aḥmad bin Sayf Āl Thānī: *State for Foreign Affairs*. [FBIS]

1979

*Jan. 30:* Amir Shaykh Khalīfah returned to Qatar at the end of a month long private visit to Europe. [MEED]

*Feb. 13:* UAA Petroleum Minister Māna' Sa'īd al-'Uṭaybah met with Amir Shaykh Khalīfah and Finance Minister Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Khalīfah Āl Thānī in Doha. [FBIS]

## Saudi Arabia

(See also, Arab Israeli Conflict, Petroleum Affairs, Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Sudan, Yemen)

1978

*Nov. 17:* US Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal arrived in Jiddah on a 2 day official visit. [FBIS]

- Nov. 27: King Khālid returned to Riyadh from Geneva. [FBIS]  
 Nov. 28: Kuwayti Amir Shaykh Jābir al-Aḥmad Āl Šabāḥ met with King Khālid in Riyadh. [AN]  
 Nov. 29: UAA President Shaykh Zāyid bin Sulṭān Āl Nuḥayyān arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālid. [AN]  
 Nov. 30: Qatari Amir Shaykh Khalīfah bin Ḥamad Āl Thānī arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālid. [AN]  
 Dec. 6: Yemeni President 'Alī 'Abdallāh Šālīḥ met with Crown Prince Fahd in Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]  
 Dec. 11: Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko met with King Khālid in Riyadh. [FBIS]

## 1979

- Jan. 10: The US said it would send 12 F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia as a demonstration of "our interest in the security of the kingdom." [NYT]  
 Jan. 15: Crown Prince Fahd attended an air show performed by a squadron of US F-15 jet fighters that has been sent to Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]  
 Jan. 17: Ugandan President Idi Amin left Riyadh at the end of a 2 day visit. [FBIS]  
 Jan. 22: Jordanian King Ḥusayn arrived in Saudi Arabia and met with King Khālid outside Riyadh. [FBIS]  
 Jan. 29: US Commerce Secretary Juanita Kreps left Saudi Arabia at the end of a 3 day visit. [AN]  
 Feb. 6: Sudanese President Ja'far al-Numayrī arrived in Jiddah and met with Crown Prince Fahd. [AN]  
 Feb. 8: Kuwayti Oil Minister Shaykh 'Alī Khalīfah Āl Šabāḥ visited Saudi Arabia and had discussions with Oil Minister Shaykh Aḥmad Zakī Yamānī. [MEES]  
 Feb. 9: Iraqi Interior Minister 'Izzat Ibrāhīm left Medina at the end of a visit to Saudi Arabia, during which a security coöperation agreement was signed. [FBIS]  
 Feb. 10: US Secretary of Defense Harold Brown pledged US support for Saudi Arabia "against external threats." [NYT]  
 Feb. 11: US Secretary of Defense Brown told Saudi leaders that the US had agreed to increase arms shipments to Yemen and Sudan. [NYT]

## South Yemen

(See also, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Syria, Yemen)

## 1978

- Dec. 23: *Arab News* reported that South Yemeni voters had gone to the polls the week before to elect deputies for the People's Supreme Council. [AN]  
 Dec. 27: A Presidium was elected by the People's Supreme Council:  
 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'īl: *Chairman*

'Alī Nāṣir Muḥammad: *Vice Chairman*  
 Fadhl Muḥsin 'Abdallāh: *Secretary General*  
 Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Dawsh, Riyāḍ al-Akbarī, Āydaḥ 'Alī Sa'īd, Sa'īd Šālīḥ Sālīm, Maḥmūd Sa'īd Madhī, 'Abdallāh Aḥmad Ghānim, Fāris Sālīm Aḥmad, 'Alī Aḥmad Nāṣir al-Salāmi: *Members* [FBIS]

A new Council of Ministers was approved by the People's Supreme Council:

'Alī Nāṣir Muḥammad: *Chairman and Finance*  
 Muḥammad Šālīḥ Muṭī: *Foreign Affairs*  
 Šālīḥ Muṣliḥ Qāsim: *Interior*  
 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd al-Walī: *Planning*  
 Muḥammad Sa'īd 'Abdallāh Muḥsin: *State Security*  
 'Alī Aḥmad Nāṣir 'Antar: *Defense*  
 Maḥmūd 'Abdallāh 'Ushaysh: *Communications*  
 Naṣr Nāṣir 'Alī: *Labor & Civil Service*  
 Ḥaydar Abū Bakr al-'Aṭṭās: *Installations*  
 Rāshid Muḥammad Thābir: *Information*  
 'Alī As'ad Muthannā: *State for Cabinet Affairs*  
 'Abdallāh Aḥmad Bukayr: *Health*  
 Maḥmūd Najjāsh: *Culture & Tourism*  
 'Abd al-Ghanī 'Abd al-Qādir: *Industry*  
 Muḥammad Sulaymān Nāṣir: *Agriculture & Agrarian Reform*  
 Muḥammad Sālīm 'Akkūsh: *Fish Resources*  
 Sa'īd 'Abd al-Khayr al-Nawbān: *Education*  
 Aḥmad 'Ubayd al-Fadhli: *Trade & Supply*  
 Khālid Fadhl Manṣūr: *Justice & Awqāf* [FBIS]

## 1979

- Jan. 6: Chairman of the Council of Ministers Muḥammad left Aden for a visit to Ethiopia. [FBIS]  
 Jan. 18: Muḥammad returned to Aden at the end of a visit to Ethiopia. [FBIS]  
 Feb. 13: Chairman of the People's Supreme Council Presidium Ismā'īl returned to Aden at the end of a tour of Arab states. [FBIS]

## Sudan

(See also, Saudi Arabia)

## 1978

- Dec. 10: President Ja'far al-Numayrī returned to Sudan at the end of a trip to Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya and Burundi. [FBIS]

## 1979

- Jan. 8: Spanish Foreign Minister Marcelino Oreja arrived in Sudan for talks on bilateral relations. [FBIS]  
 Jan. 12: Egyptian Premier Muṣṭafā Khalīl arrived in Khartoum to attend meetings of the Higher Ministerial Committee on Integration between Egypt and Sudan. [FBIS]

April 21: A new Cabinet was sworn in:

Mir Ali Ahmed Talpur: *Defense*  
 Faiez Ali Chisti: *Labor & Manpower, Petroleum and Northern Areas & Kashmir Affairs*  
 Inamul Haq: *Housing & Works, Water & Power*  
 Ghulam Hassan Khan: *Production & Industries*  
 Ghulam Ishaq Khan: *Finance, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission and Provincial Coordinator & Commissioner*  
 Muhammad Ali Khan: *Education*  
 Fazil Janjua: *Food, Agriculture and Coöperatives*  
 Mahmud Haroon: *Interior, Religious Affairs and Minority Affairs*  
 Jamal Syed Mian: *Railways and Local Government & Rural Development*  
 Sharifuddin Pirzada: *Attorney General, Law & Parliamentary Affairs*  
 Mohyuddin Baluch: *Communications*  
 Javed Hashmi: *Culture & Tourism*  
 Shamid Hamed: *Information & Broadcasting*  
 Hamid Habib: *State for Export Development*  
 Mahmud Ali: *State for National Council of Social Affairs*  
 Agha Shahi: *Adviser for Foreign Affairs*  
 M. Afzal: *Adviser for Higher Education*  
 Muazzam Ali: *Adviser for Overseas Pakistani Affairs*  
 Hakim Mohammad Syed: *Health*  
 Begum Waqarun Nisa Noon: *Chairman of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation* [FBIS]

## Qatar

(See also, Arab Israeli Conflict)

1979

Feb. 21: British Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Qatar and was met by Amir Shaykh Khalifah bin Hamad Āl Thānī. [AN]  
 March 1: Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yāsir 'Arafāt arrived in Doha and met with Amir Shaykh Khalifah. [FBIS]  
 March 14: A Jordanian airliner crashed in Qatar during a thunderstorm, killing 45 people. [NYT]  
 April 9: Lebanese Premier Salīm al-Ḥuṣṣ met with Amir Shaykh Khalifah in Doha. [FBIS]  
 April 23: Turkish Foreign Minister Gündüz Özkün arrived in Doha on a 2 day visit to Qatar. [FBIS]  
 May 3: Qatar announced a revaluation of the riyal by 2% as of May 15. [FBIS]  
 May 11: *Middle East Economic Digest* reported that the UAA and Bahrayn had suspended their currency exchange arrangements with Qatar following the Qatari revaluation. [MEED]

## Saudi Arabia

(See also, Arab Israeli Conflict, Petroleum Affairs, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco)

1979

Feb. 24: South Yemeni Foreign Minister Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Muṭī' arrived in Riyadh, met with Foreign Minister Sa'ūd al-Fayṣal, and returned to South Yemen. [FBIS]  
 Feb. 26: Greek Premier Constantine Karamanlis met with Crown Prince Fahd and other Saudi officials in Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]  
 Feb. 28: Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yāsir 'Arāfat met with King Khālid in Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]  
 March 4: Saudi Arabian delegate to the UN Jamīl Murād Bārūdī died, aged 73. [NYT]  
 March 10: Guinean President Sekou Touré met with King Khālid in Jiddah. [FBIS]  
 March 21: Jordanian King Ḥusayn began a 2 day visit to Saudi Arabia for talks with King Khālid on the Middle East situation. [FBIS]  
 March 25: It was announced that Crown Prince Fahd had arrived in Spain and been admitted to a hospital for a medical examination. [FBIS]  
 April 1: Lebanese Premier Salīm al-Ḥuṣṣ arrived in Riyadh on a visit. [FBIS]  
 April 29: *The New York Times* quoted Prince 'Abdallāh as saying that all Saudi leaders were "united in opinion, spirit, objective and perspective." [NYT]  
 May 12: Yemeni President 'Alī 'Abdallāh Ṣāliḥ arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālid. [FBIS]  
 May 13: Crown Prince Fahd met with French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in Paris. [AN]  
 May 14: Crown Prince Fahd met with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in Bonn. [AN]

## South Yemen

(See also, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen)

1979

March 30: Chairman of the Presidium 'Abd al-Fattāh Ismā'il returned to Aden from a summit conference in Kuwait. [FBIS]  
 April 7: Foreign Minister Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Muṭī' left South Yemen for Addis Ababa and met with Ethiopian Head of State Mengistu Haile Mariam. [FBIS]  
 April 13: Premier 'Alī Nāṣir Muḥammad left Damascus for Bulgaria at the end of a 1 day visit to Syria. [FBIS]

May 22: The government released from confinement former Commander of the Army Tikka Khan and 4 other officials of the Pakistan People's Party. [NYT]

May 25: Begum Nusrat Bhutto, widow of former Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was elected President of the Pakistan People's Party. [FBIS]

May 28: Nusrat Bhutto and her daughter Benazir were released from detention near Islamabad and flown to Karachi. [NYT]

July 1: Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Shah Mohammad Dost arrived in Islamabad on a 2 day visit. [FBIS]

July 8: Opponents of government budget policy staged a 1 day strike in Karachi. [NYT]

July 24: Four men convicted with former Premier Bhutto of a political murder were hanged. [AN]

## Qatar

(See also, Petroleum Affairs, Saudi Arabia)

1979

July 2: Libyan Head of State Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī arrived in Doha for talks with Qatari leaders. [FBIS]

July 8: Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre arrived in Doha for talks. [FBIS]

## Saudi Arabia

(See also, Petroleum Affairs, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Yemen)

1979

June 5: Yemeni Premier 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Abd al-Ghanī arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālīd. [FBIS]

June 24: Mauritanian President Mohamed Mahmud Louly arrived in Saudi Arabia on an official visit. [FBIS] West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher left Jiddah at the end of a 2 day visit. [FBIS]

June 26: Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Jābir al-Aḥmad Āl Ṣabāḥ left Saudi Arabia at the end of a 1 day visit to the Kingdom. [FBIS]

Qatari Amir Shaykh Khalīfah bin Ḥamad Āl Thānī arrived in Saudi Arabia and was met by King Khālīd. [FBIS]

July 1: Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre arrived in Riyadh for talks with Saudi leaders. [FBIS]

July 4: Libyan Head of State Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī arrived in Riyadh and was met by King Khālīd. [FBIS]

July 13: Japanese Minister of International Trade Masumi Esaki arrived in Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi leaders. [FBIS]

July 14: Maltese Premier Dom Mintoff arrived in Jiddah on an official visit. [FBIS]

July 16: French Defense Minister Yvon Bourges met with King Khālīd in al-Ṭā'if. [FBIS]

July 17: Jordanian King Ḥusayn met with King Khālīd in al-Ṭā'if. [FBIS]

## South Yemen

(See also, Algeria, Libya)

1979

June 3: An Iraqi university professor teaching at Aden University was murdered at his home. It was reported that 2 Iraqis had been seen leaving the scene in a car with diplomatic plates. [MEED]

June 4: Troops surrounded the Iraqi Embassy. [MEED]

June 5: Troops stormed the Iraqi Embassy and took 5 Iraqis into custody. [MEED]

June 12: *The Iraqi News Agency* cited an Iraqi Foreign Ministry spokesman as announcing the withdrawal of its Ambassador from Aden. [FBIS]

June 27: Minister of Fish Resources Muḥammad Ṣālim 'Akkūsh was relieved of his post. [FBIS]

July 9: Libyan Head of State Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī arrived in Aden and was met by Chairman of the Presidium 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'īl. [FBIS]

July 13: *Aden Domestic Service* reported that Chairman of the Council of Ministers 'Alī Nāṣir Muḥammad had returned to Aden at the end of a visit to the Soviet Union. [FBIS]

Aug. 5: *The New York Times* cited "Navy intelligence sources" as saying a Soviet nuclear submarine and a tender had entered the port of Yemen. [NYT]

Aug. 11: The Supreme People's Council met in extraordinary session. It elected Muḥammad 'Awad al-Sa'dī and Ṭaha 'Alī Ṣāliḥ as members of the Presidium in place of Faḍīl Muḥsin 'Abdallāh and Maḥmūd Sa'īd Madhī. [FBIS]

The following were elected as members of the Council of Ministers:

Anīs Ḥasan Yahyā: *Fish Resources*

Ṣālim Ṣāliḥ Muḥammad: *Foreign Affairs*

'Alī Shayḥ Hādī: *Interior*

Faḍīl Muḥsin 'Abdallāh: *Agriculture & Agrarian Reform*

Maḥmūd Sa'īd Madhī: *Finance*

Faraj bin Ghānim: *Planning* [FBIS]

## Sudan

1979

May 19: A trial of 45 defendants accused of political crimes began in a Khartoum suburb. [FBIS]

May 23: French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing arrived in Khartoum for talks with Sudanese leaders. [FBIS]

May 28: The following Cabinet appointments were made: 'Abd al-Mājid Khalīl: *Defense*

- Nov. 5: A Pakistani who tried to hijack a jetliner in 1978 was executed in Rawalpindi. [NYT]
- Nov. 11: The Lahore High Court admitted a petition challenging the ban on political parties, the second amendment to the Constitution and postponement of the general elections. [FBIS]
- Nov. 12: Zia-ul-Haq announced that, despite reports to the contrary, there would be no change in the federal Cabinet or the present administrative set-up. [FBIS]
- Nov. 13: A correspondent for Hong Kong's *Far Eastern Economic Review* was arrested at his residence. [FBIS]
- Nov. 15: Zia-ul-Haq inaugurated the Jelabandi bridge, a landmark in Kashmir reconstruction. [FBIS]

## Qatar

(See also, Saudi Arabia)

1979

- Sept. 9: Amir Shaykh Khalifah bin Hamad Āl Thāni flew to Europe on a private visit. [FBIS]
- Sept. 11: Maltese Premier Dom Mintoff arrived in Doha for talks with Qatari officials. [FBIS]
- Oct. 4: Saudi Arabian Defense Minister Sulṭān bin 'Abd al-'Aziz met with Amir Shaykh Khalifah in Paris. [FBIS]
- Oct. 14: Amir Shaykh Khalifah returned to Doha at the end of a private visit to Europe. [FBIS]
- Nov. 8: The Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmedou Ould 'Abdallah arrived in Qatar for talks with the Amir and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. [FBIS]

## Saudi Arabia

(See also, Petroleum Affairs, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Qatar, Syria, Yemen)

1979

- Aug. 19: Pakistani President Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq arrived in Jiddah on a 3 day visit to Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]
- Aug. 29: Sudanese President Ja'far al-Numayrī arrived in al-Ṭā'if and was met by King Khālid. [FBIS]
- Sept. 1: King Khālid arrived in Geneva on a visit to Switzerland. [FBIS]
- Sept. 2: Lebanese Defense Minister Jūzif Skāf met with Crown Prince Fahd in al-Ṭā'if on the question of Saudi aid to Lebanon. [AN]
- Sept. 6: UAA President Shaykh Zāyid bin Sulṭān Āl Nuḥayyān met with King Khālid in Geneva. [FBIS]
- Sept. 8: Iranian Minister of National Guidance Nāṣir Mināchi met in al-Ṭā'if with Crown Prince Fahd. [NYT]

- Sept. 9: Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi arrived in al-Ṭā'if and was met by Crown Prince Fahd. [FBIS]
- Sept. 10: Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre met with Crown Prince Fahd in al-Ṭā'if. [FBIS]
- Sept. 20: Jordanian King Husayn arrived in Geneva and met with King Khālid. [FBIS]
- Oct. 6: Lebanese Premier Salīm al-Huṣṣ arrived in Jiddah for talks with Saudi leaders. [FBIS]
- Oct. 16: A meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAA, Oman and Saudi Arabia took place in al-Ṭā'if on Gulf matters. [FBIS]
- Oct. 19: A group of Chinese Muslims left Peking for Saudi Arabia to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. [NYT]
- Nov. 10: Finnish Foreign Minister Paavo Vayrynen arrived in Jiddah for a 3 day official visit. [AN]

## South Yemen

(See also, General, Algeria, Libya, Yemen)

1979

- Aug. 16: Maḥmūd Sa'id al-Madhī was appointed Finance Minister. [FBIS]
- Sept. 17: Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin ended a visit to South Yemen. [NYT]
- Oct. 4: Premier 'Alī Nāṣir Muḥammad returned to Aden at the end of a visit to Yemen. [FBIS]
- Oct. 24: Chairman of the Presidium 'Abd al-Fattāh Ismā'il arrived in Moscow and was met by Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev. [FBIS]
- Oct. 25: South Yemen and the Soviet Union signed a 20-year treaty of friendship in Moscow. [NYT]
- Nov. 4: The first session of talks on economic and technical coöperation between 'Uthmān 'Abd al-Jabbār, acting Deputy Minister for Planning, and the Deputy Minister for External Trade of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) began in Aden. [FBIS]
- Nov. 13: Premier Muḥammad appointed Ṣāliḥ Abū Bakr ibn Husaynūn and Aḥmad Salīm 'Ubayd Deputy Defense Ministers. [FBIS]
- Nov. 15: Erich Honecker, Chairman of the GDR State Council, arrived in Aden on an official visit. [FBIS]

## Sudan

(See also, Saudi Arabia)

1979

- August 17: A new Cabinet was formed:  
Aḥmad al-Sayyid Hamad: *Communications*  
Hasan 'Abdallāh al-Turābī: *Attorney General*  
'Abd al-Mājid Khalil: *First Vice President and Defense*



## 1980

*Jan. 4:* US President Jimmy Carter said the US would provide military equipment and other assistance to help Pakistan "defend its independence and its national security" against the "seriously increased threat" from the north. [NYT]

*Jan. 12:* Zia-ul-Haq met with tribal chiefs at Saidu in the northwest frontier region and said the borders of the Soviet Union had been effectively extended to the Khyber Pass. [NYT]

Foreign Affairs Adviser Shahi met with US President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in Washington on US aid and commitments to Pakistan. [NYT]

*Jan. 13:* US officials said the US had offered Pakistan a tentative economic and military aid package of about \$400m. [NYT]

*Jan. 15:* British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington met with Zia-ul-Haq in Rawalpindi. [FBIS]

*Jan. 16:* Lord Carrington visited the border with Afghanistan and said that Britain would do its best "to insure that Pakistan remains an independent country." [NYT]

*Jan. 17:* Zia-ul-Haq said that the size of the offer of US aid was "peanuts". [NYT]

*Jan. 18:* Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua arrived in Islamabad for talks on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. [NYT]

*Jan. 23:* UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim left Islamabad after meeting with Zia-ul-Haq. [FBIS]

*Jan. 24:* The European Economic Community said it would give more than \$20m to Pakistan to aid refugees from Afghanistan. [NYT]

*Feb. 1:* US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski arrived in Islamabad for talks with Pakistani leaders. [NYT]

*Feb. 2:* US national security adviser Brzezinski met with Zia-ul-Haq. Zia-ul-Haq said that the US was "giving us the impression of finding a lost Asian ally." [NYT]

*Feb. 3:* Zia-ul-Haq said that the talks with US officials had given "new life" to a 1959 US security accord with Pakistan. [NYT]

*Feb. 5:* Indian Foreign Secretary R. D. Sathe met with Zia-ul-Haq and Shahi during a trip to Pakistan. [FBIS]

*Feb. 7:* Indian Foreign Minister Sathe returned to India and said his discussions with Pakistani leaders had been "friendly, cordial, frank and useful." [NYT]

## Qatar

(See also, General, Petroleum Affairs, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia)

## 1980

*Jan. 14:* Jordanian King Ḥusayn arrived in Doha and met with Amir Shaykh Khalīfah bin Ḥamad Āl Thānī. [FBIS]

*Feb. 10:* Venezuelan President Luis Herrera Campins met with Amir Shaykh Khalīfah in Doha. [FBIS]

## Saudi Arabia

(See also, Arab Israeli Conflict, General, Petroleum Affairs, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen)

## 1979

*Nov. 20:* Muslim gunmen seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and took hostages. [NYT]

*Nov. 21:* *Tehran Domestic Service* quoted a statement issued by Āyat Allāh Rūḥ Allāh Khumaynī which said it was "not farfetched" to assume the attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca had been "perpetrated by the criminal American imperialism." [FBIS]

*Nov. 22:* The government said that the occupation of the Grand Mosque by Muslim fundamentalists was continuing in Mecca. [NYT]

Interior Minister Prince Nāyif said that neither the US nor Iran was in any way responsible for the attack on the Grand Mosque. [NYT]

*The New York Times* cited sources in the Interior Ministry as confirming that an attempt to take over the Prophet's Mosque in Medina had taken place 2 days earlier. [NYT]

*Nov. 23:* A government official said that security forces were in "complete control within all areas" of the Grand Mosque. [NYT]

*Nov. 24:* US Treasury Secretary William Miller met with King Khālīd in Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]

US Treasury Secretary Miller said that Saudi leaders were "very upset" because they felt that the low Saudi oil prices had "not gone to the benefit of consumers" but had instead been "raked off by the oil companies." [NYT]

Iranian Āyat Allāh Khumaynī charged that the US "and its corrupt colony, Israel" were "attempting to occupy" the Grand Mosque in Mecca and called on Muslims to "rise up and defend Islam." [NYT]

*Nov. 26:* Information Minister Muḥammad Abdū Yamānī said that soldiers had cornered the last of the gunmen in the basement of the Grand Mosque. [NYT]

Bahrayni Amir Shaykh 'Isā bin Salmān Āl Khalīfah and Kuwayti Amir Shaykh Jābir al-Aḥmad Āl Ṣabāḥ arrived in Riyadh and were met by King Khālīd. [FBIS]

A Pakistani airliner crashed near Jidda, killing all 156 people aboard. Most of the passengers were Muslim pilgrims. [NYT]

Nov. 27: Qatari Amir Shaykh Khalifah bin Hamad Āl Thānī arrived in Riyadh and was met by King Khālid. [FBIS]

Nov. 28: Clashes in Sayhat between Shi'a workers and the National Guard left 5 people dead. [MEED]  
Jordanian King Husayn arrived in Riyadh and was met by King Khālid. [FBIS]

Nov. 30: Interior Minister Prince Nāyif said that some of the gunmen at the Grand Mosque were still holding out in tunnels under the building. [NYT]

Dec. 4: Prince Nāyif announced that the last of the attackers of the Grand Mosque had been captured. [AN]

Dec. 6: King Khālid reopened the Grand Mosque for prayers. [NYT]

Dec. 24: Pakistani President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq arrived in Riyadh on a 3 day visit to Saudi Arabia and met with King Khālid. [FBIS]

Dec. 31: *Riyadh Domestic Service* announced that King Khālid had accepted the resignation of the Governor of Mecca District, Prince Fawwāz bin 'Abd al-'Aziz. [FBIS]

## 1980

Jan. 1: *The Saudi Press Agency* reported that King Khālid had ordered the retirement of the commander of the air force and the commander of the public security forces. [NYT]

Jan. 8: Prince Nāyif said that 127 Saudi soldiers had been killed as a result of the siege at the Grand Mosque. In addition, 75 gunmen had been killed and 27 others had died of wounds suffered in the siege. [AN]

Jan. 9: A total of 63 people were executed in 8 cities for their part in the attack on the Grand Mosque. An Interior Ministry statement said that 28 people had been acquitted and that a number of others had been sentenced to prison reformatories. [NYT]

Jan. 12: Jordanian King Husayn arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālid. [FBIS]

Jan. 13: British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington arrived in Riyadh for talks with Saudi officials. [FBIS]

Jan. 26: Syrian President Hāfiẓ al-Asad arrived in Riyadh and met with King Khālid on bilateral relations. [FBIS]

Feb. 3: Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky met with Crown Prince Fahd in Riyadh. [FBIS]

Feb. 4: US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski arrived in Riyadh and met with Crown Prince Fahd. [FBIS]

Feb. 5: *The New York Times* cited US officials in the Brzezinski mission as saying Saudi leaders had said they were willing to consider closer military coöperation in the Gulf region. [NYT]

Feb. 7: Moroccan King Hasan arrived at al-Ṭā'if and was met by King Khālid. [FBIS]

Feb. 11: Venezuelan President Luis Herrera Campins arrived in Riyadh for meetings with Saudi officials. [FBIS]

## South Yemen

(See also, Yemen)

## 1979

Nov. 16: Chairman of the East German State Council Erich Honecker and Chairman of the Presidium 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'il spoke before a rally in Ja'ar. [FBIS]

Nov. 17: A treaty of friendship and coöperation with East Germany was signed in South Yemen. [MEED]

Nov. 29: Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam arrived in Aden and conferred with Chairman of the Presidium Ismā'il. [FBIS]

## 1980

Jan. 31: *Aden News Agency* reported that an agreement with Yemen to unify telephone tariffs and reduce postal charges between the 2 countries had been made. [MEED]

## Sudan

## 1979

Dec. 3: President Ja'far al-Numayrī left Sudan for Monrovia, Liberia, to participate in a meeting of the Organization of African Unity. [FBIS]

Dec. 30: Sudan and Uganda agreed to restore diplomatic relations. [AN]

## 1980

Jan. 10: Saudi Arabian Petroleum Minister Aḥmad Zakī Yamānī met with President Numayrī in Sudan on energy coöperation. [FBIS]

Feb. 4: Numayrī issued a decree dissolving parliament and the regional legislative assembly of south Sudan. [AN]

## Syria

(See also, General, Lebanon)

## 1979

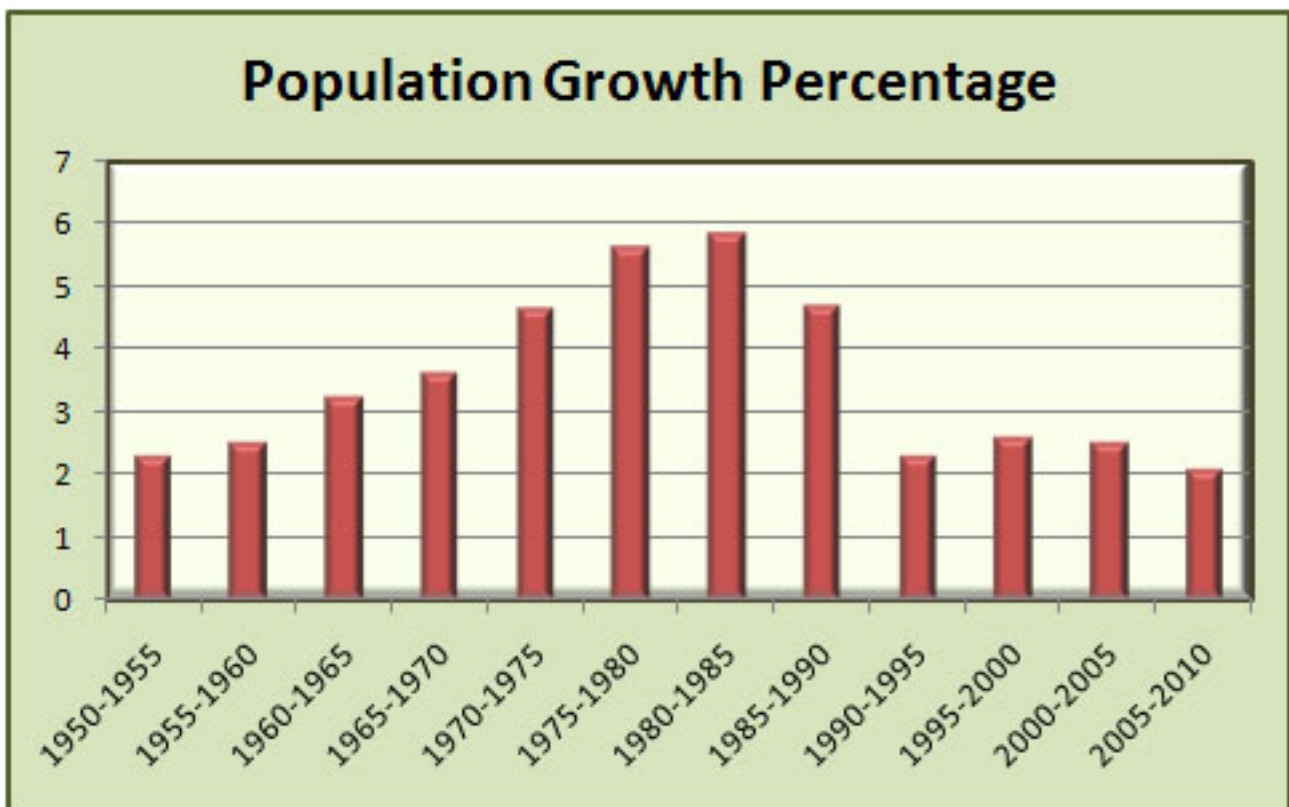
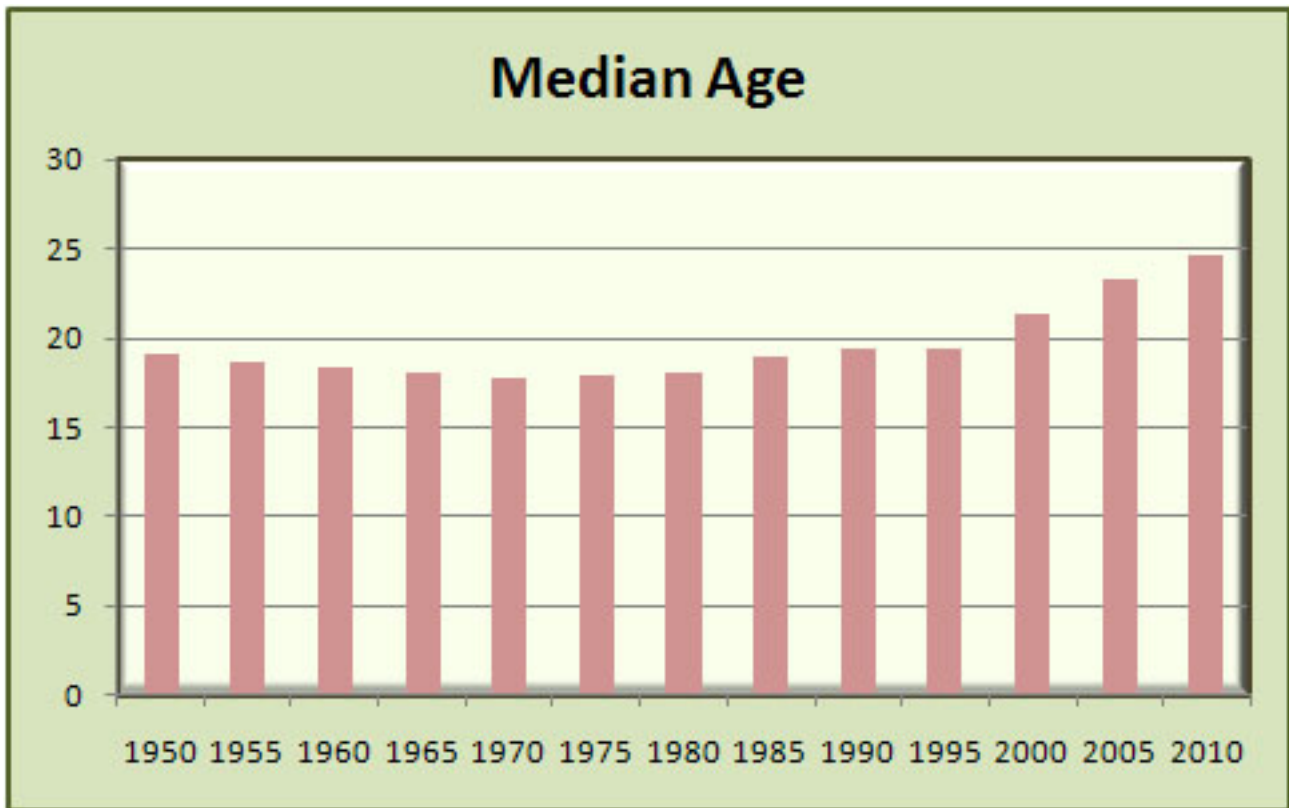
Nov. 22: Syrian President Hāfiẓ al-Asad returned to Syria after attending a summit conference in Tunis. [FBIS]

Nov. 25: Gunmen tried to assassinate the governor of Hama. Two of the gunmen and 2 members of the

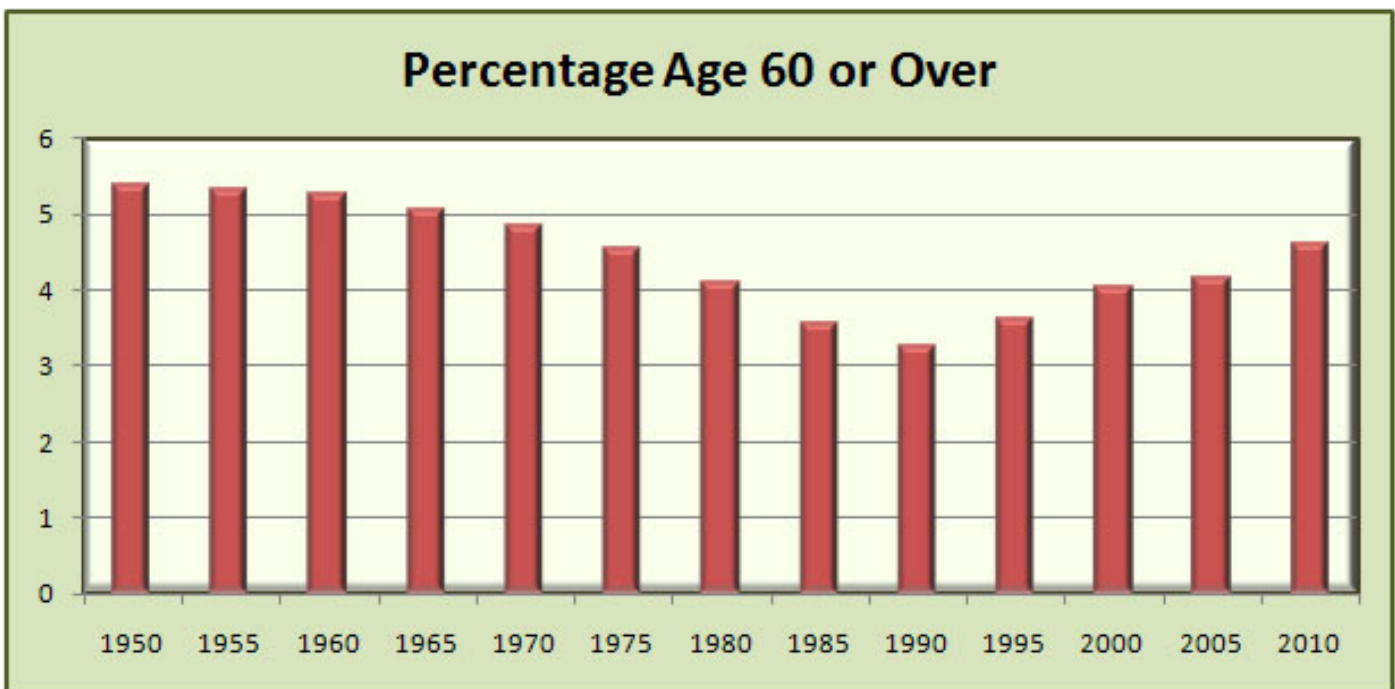
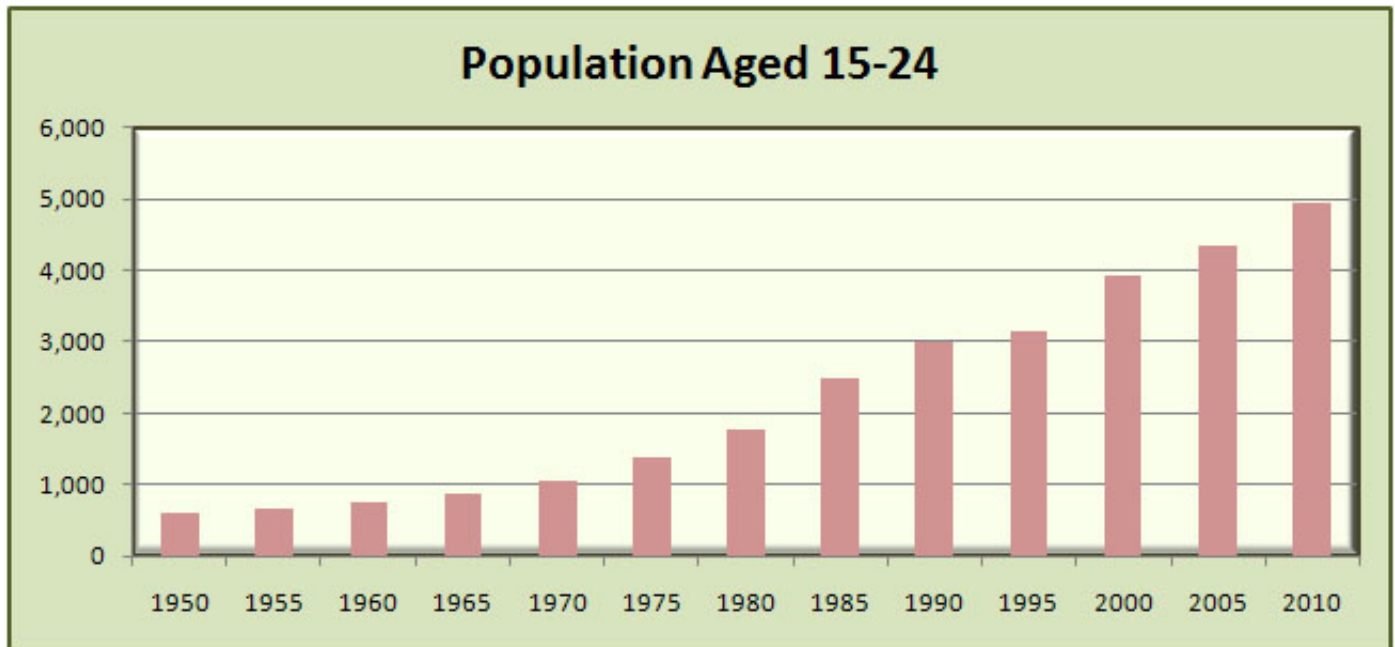
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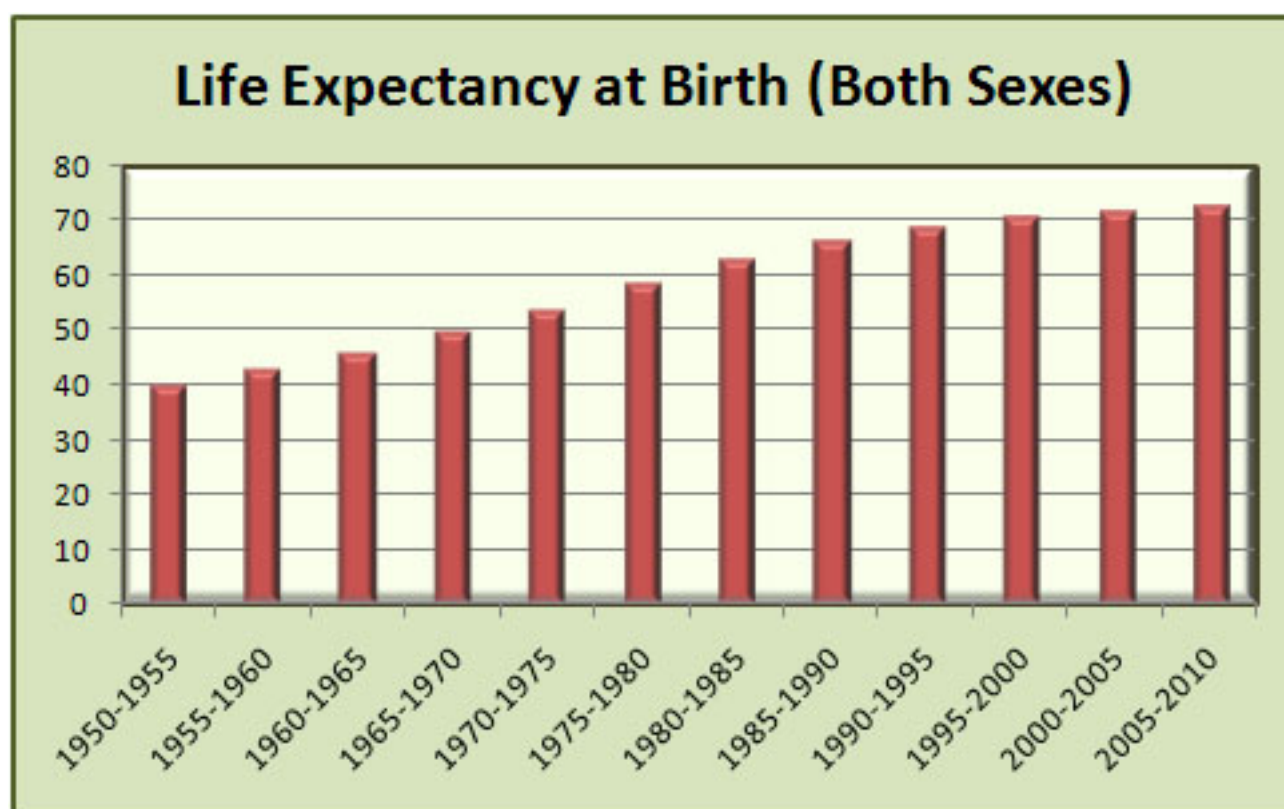
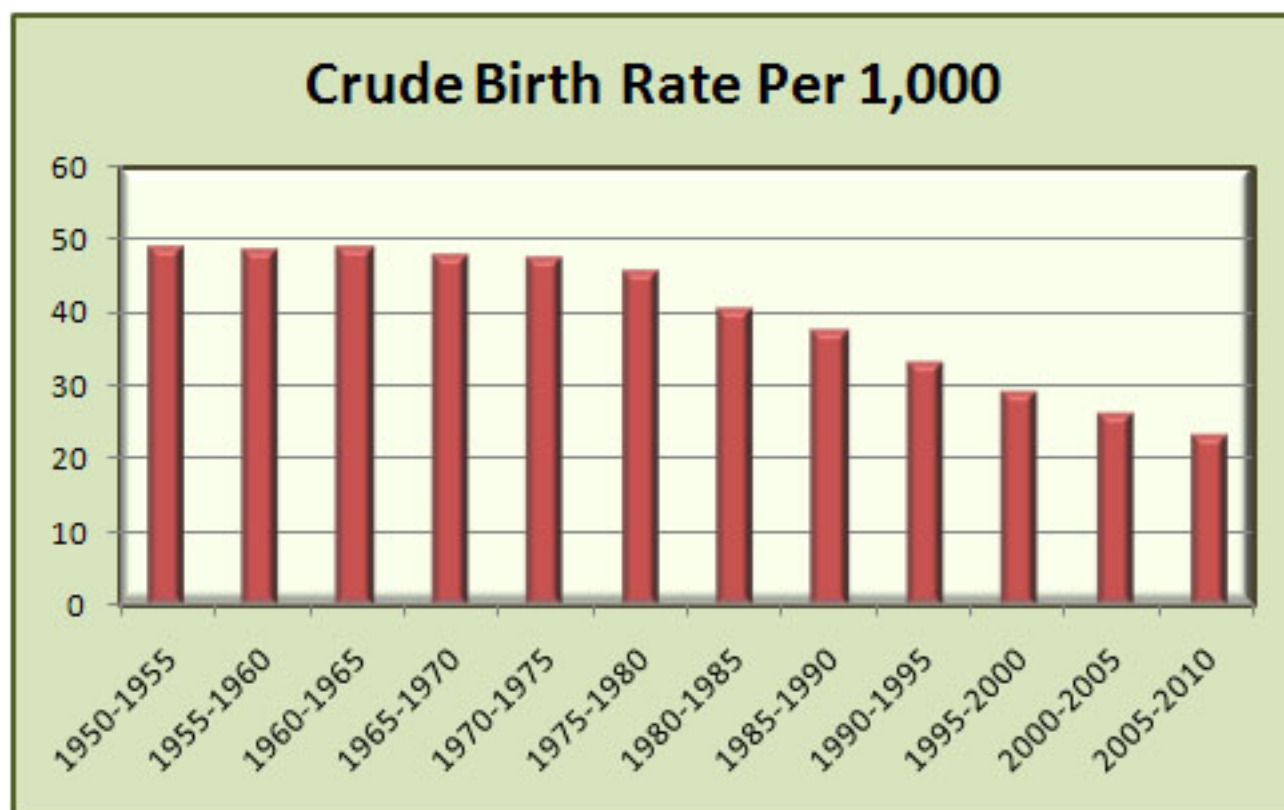
# Statistics

# Demographics

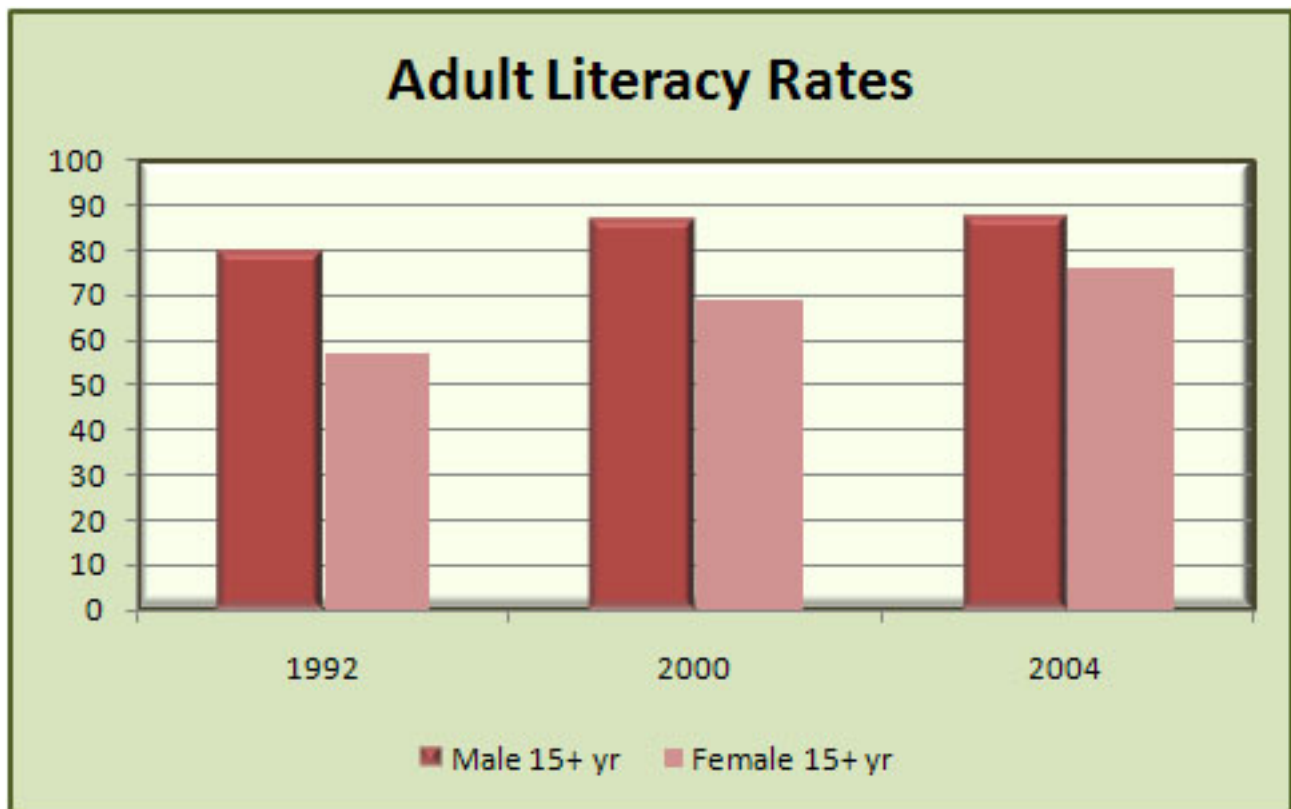
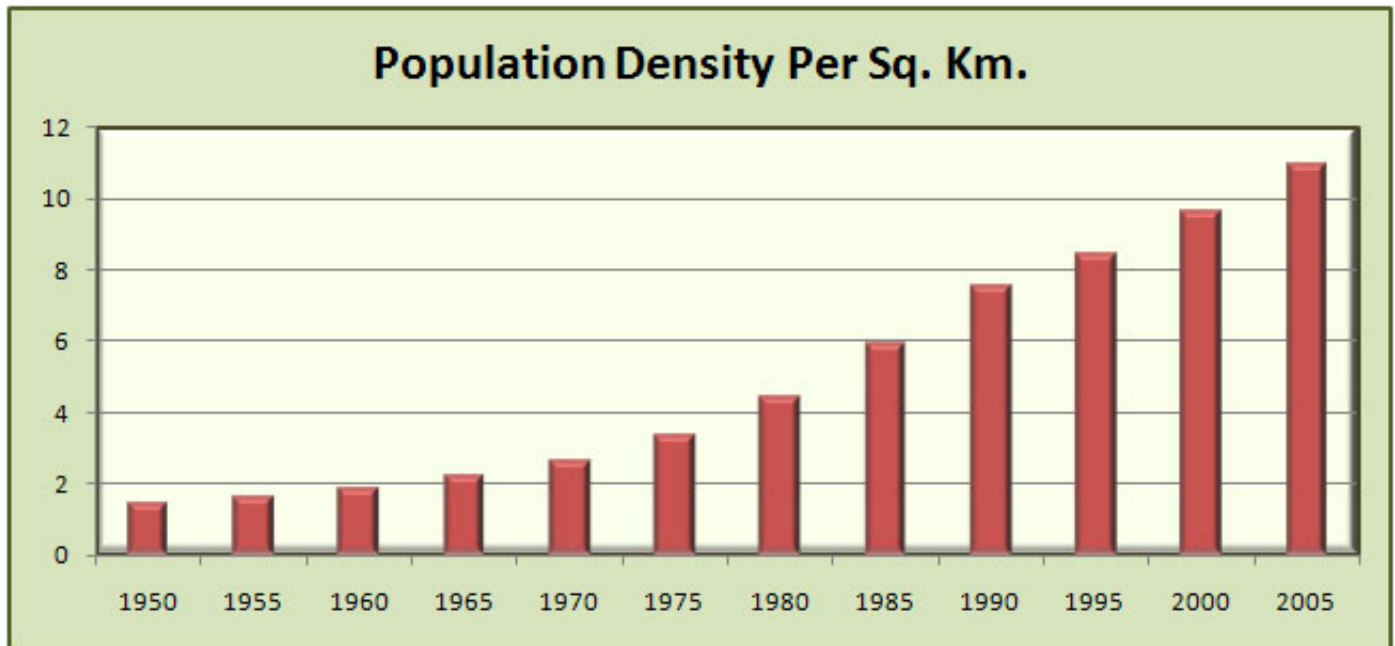


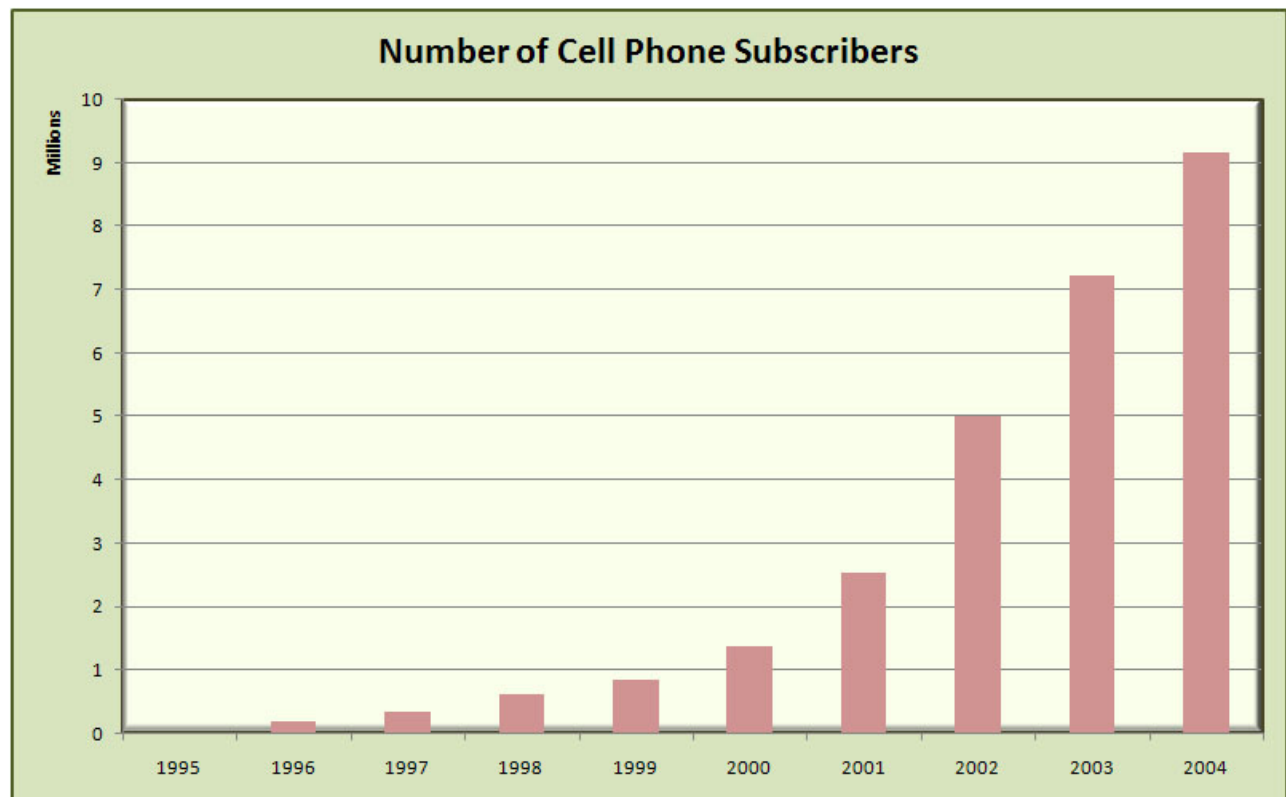
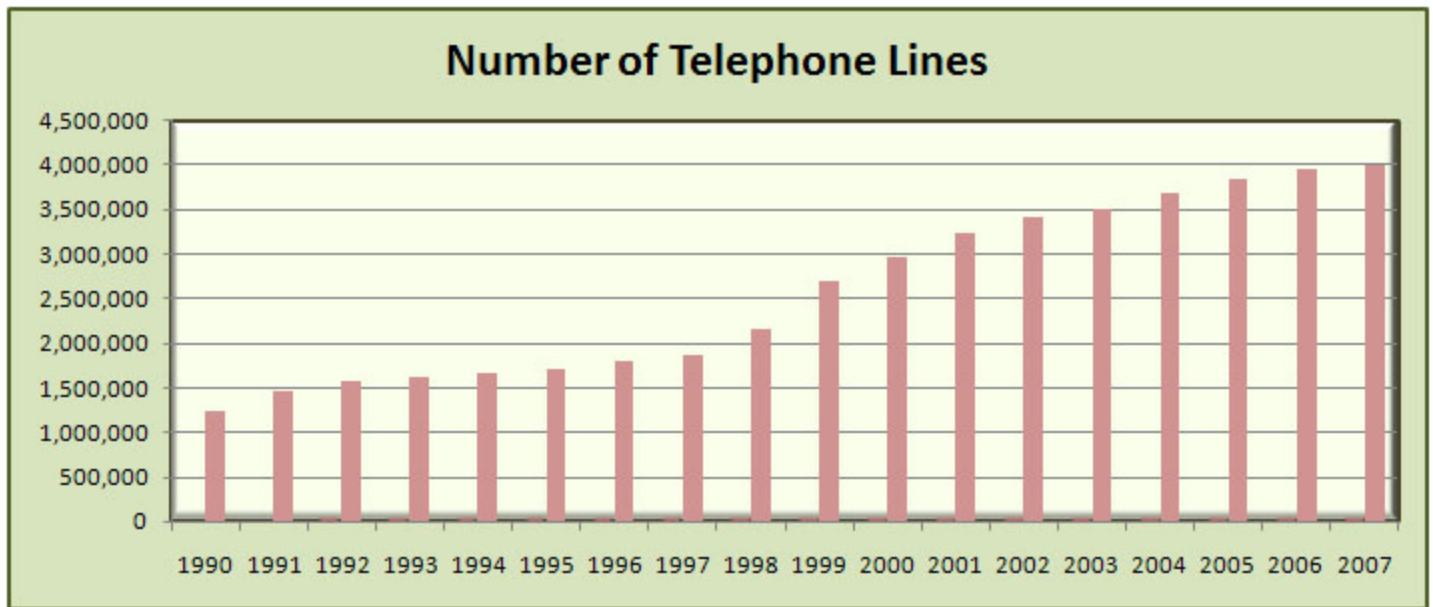
All statistics are from the UN unless otherwise noted.

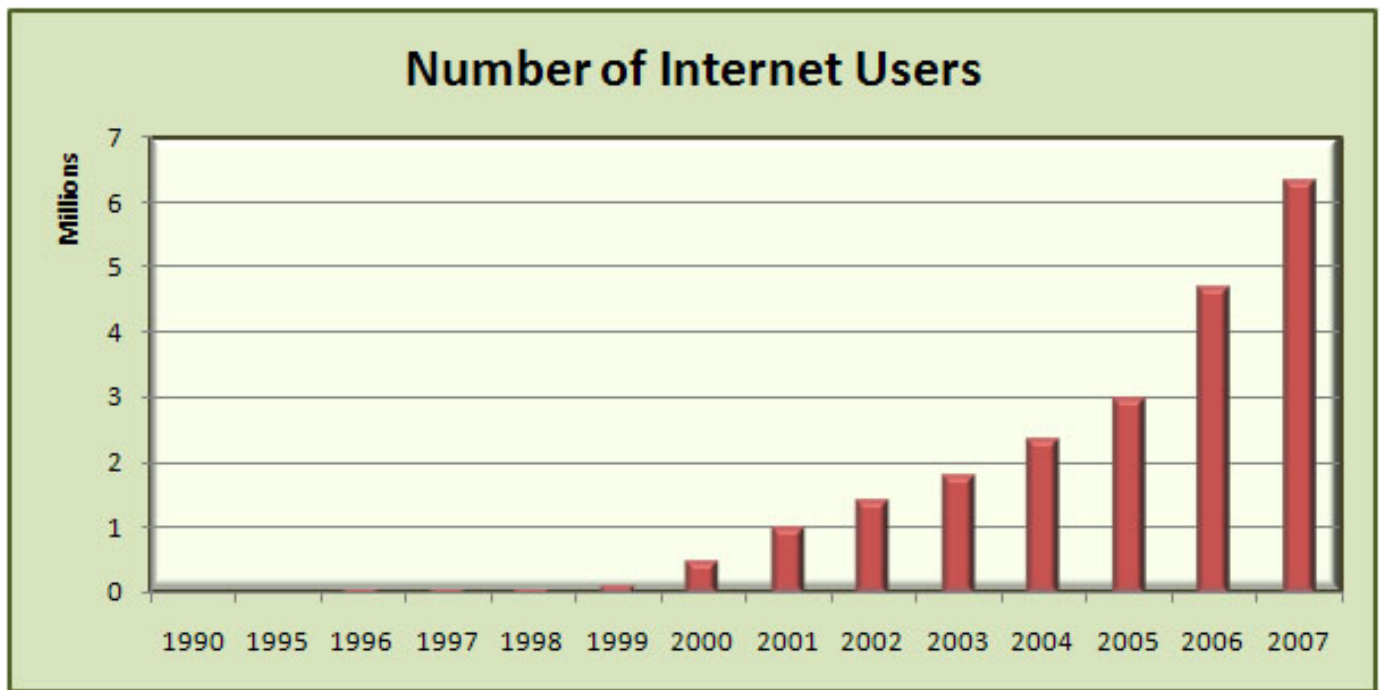
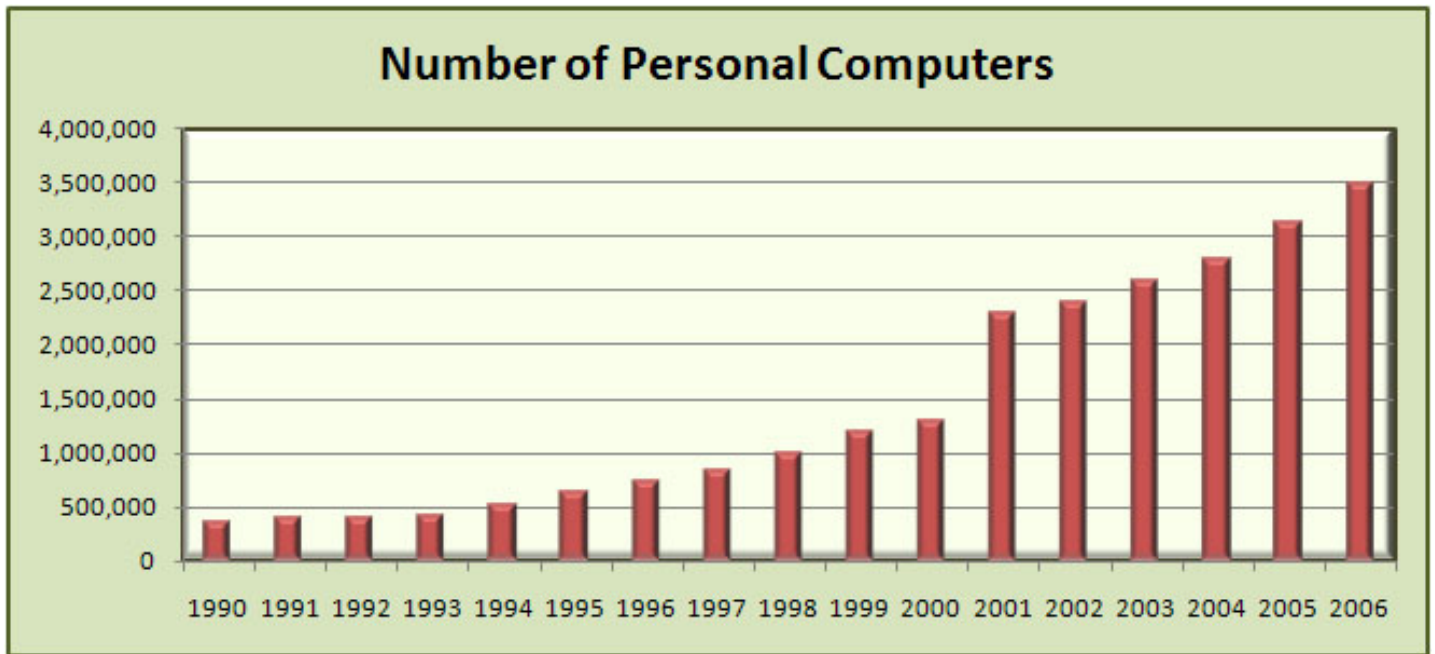






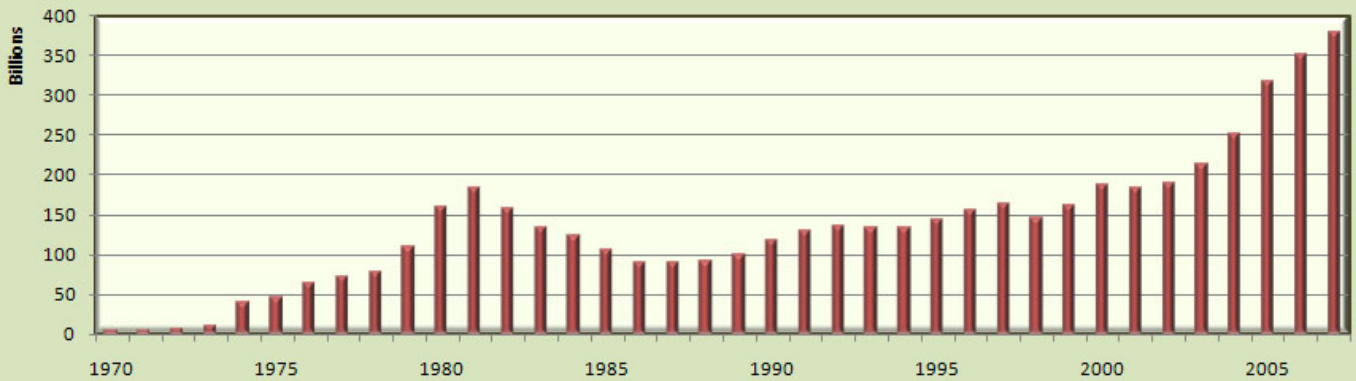




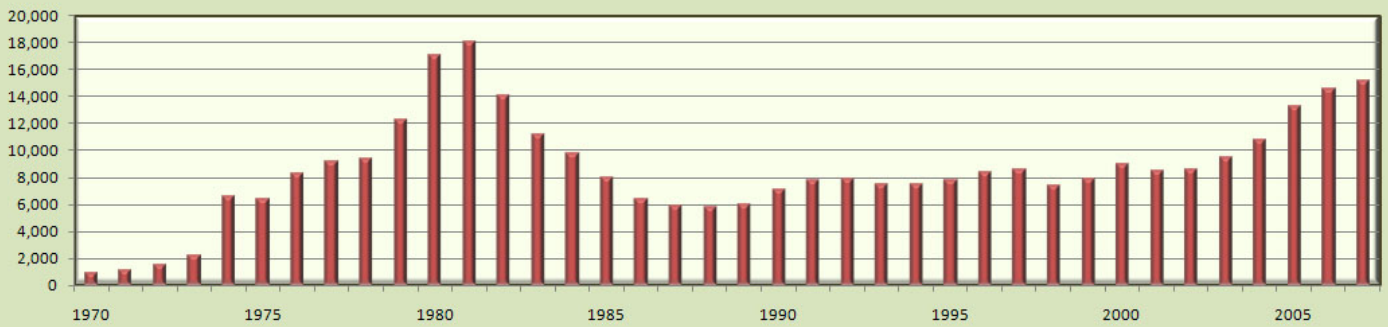


# Economy

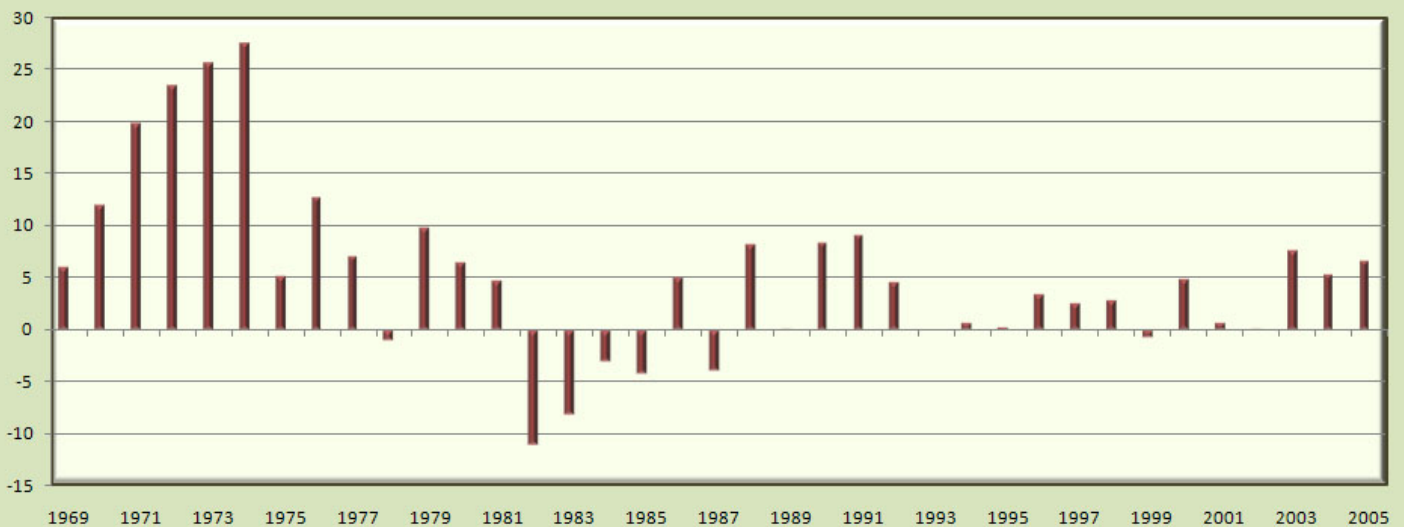
**Gross National Income (GNI) at Current Prices in USD**



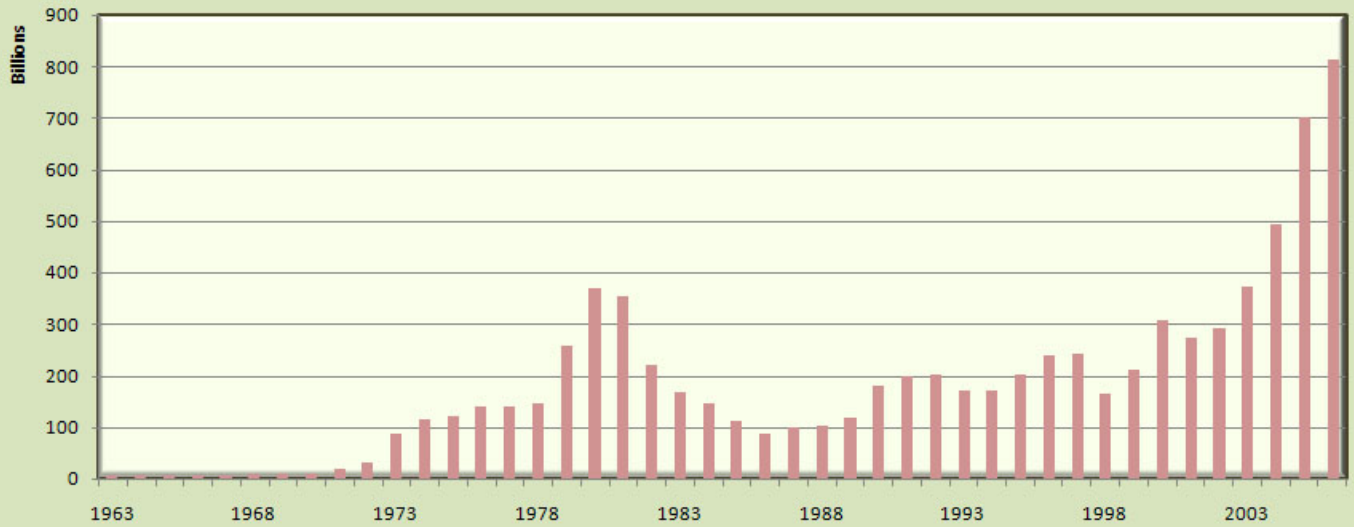
**Per Capita GDP at Current Prices in US Dollars**



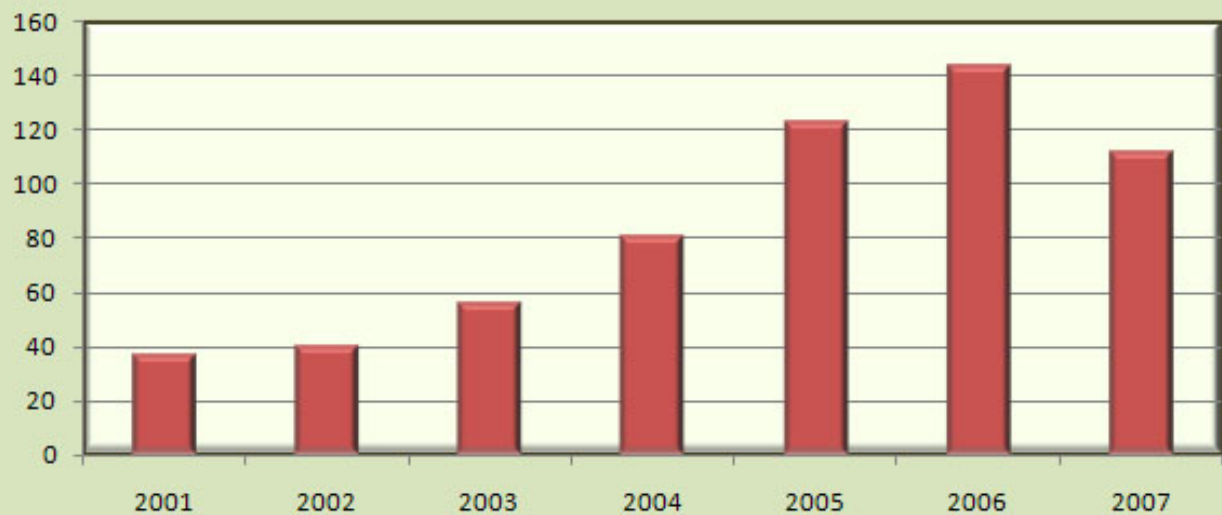
**GDP Annual Rate of Growth**



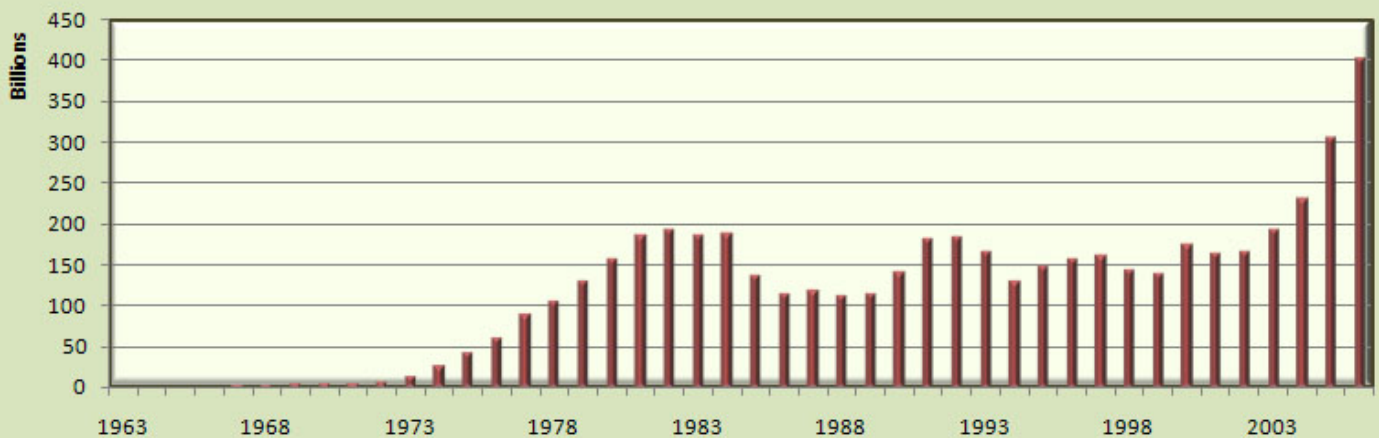
### Exports of Goods and Services in National Currency



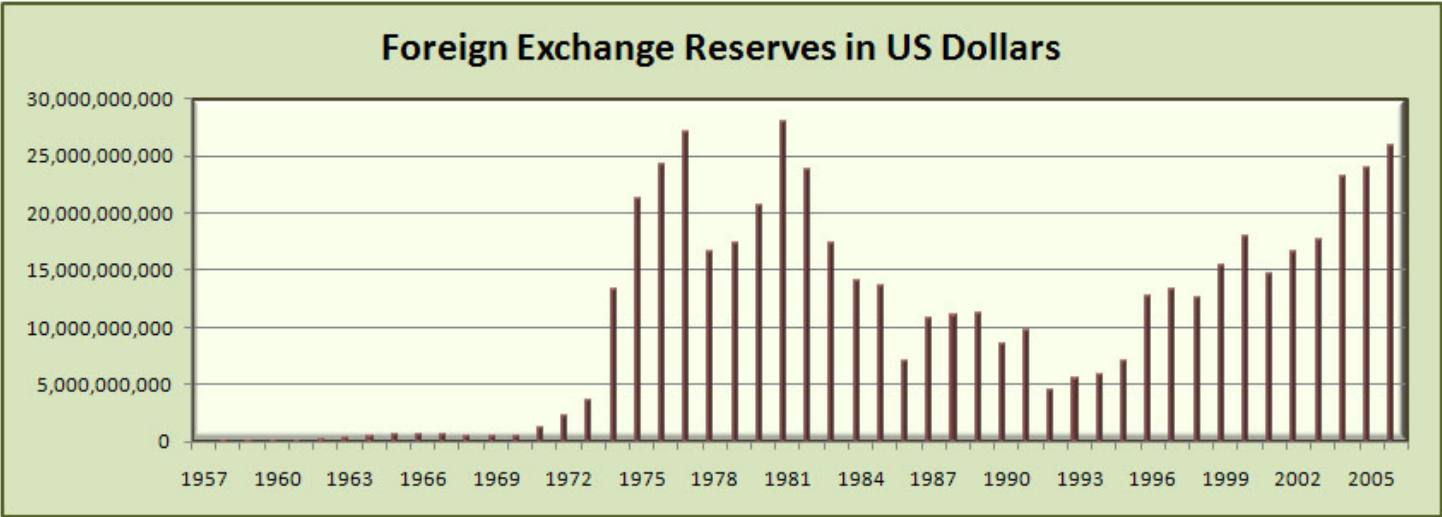
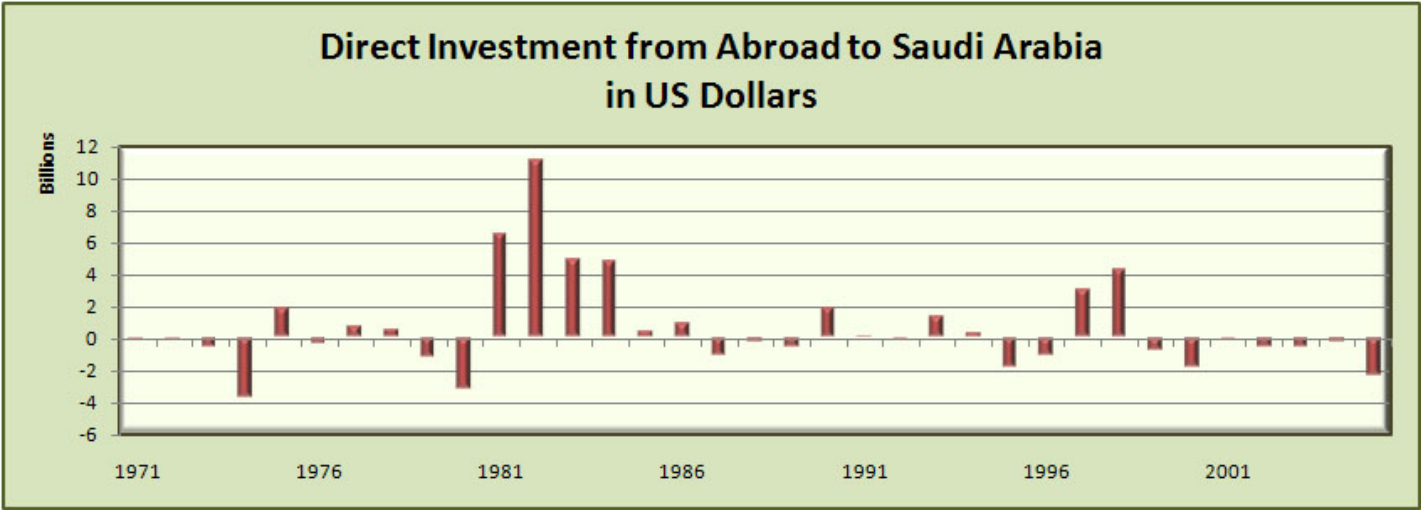
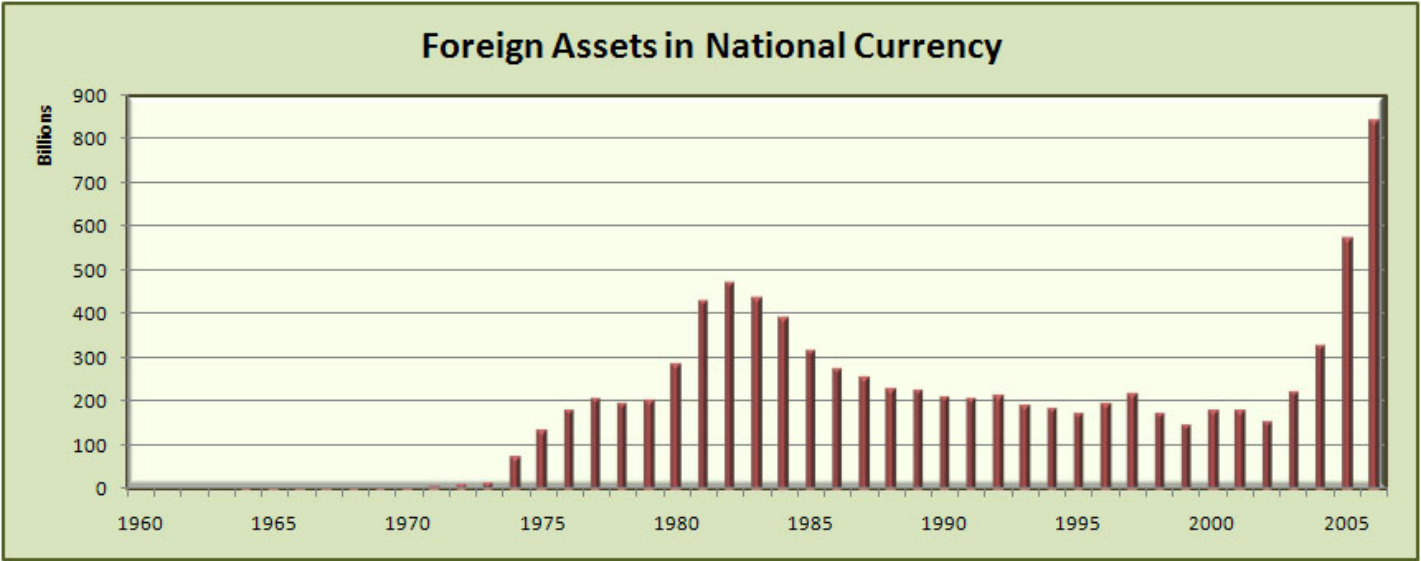
### Trade Balance for Goods in Billions of USD



### Imports of Goods and Services in National Currency

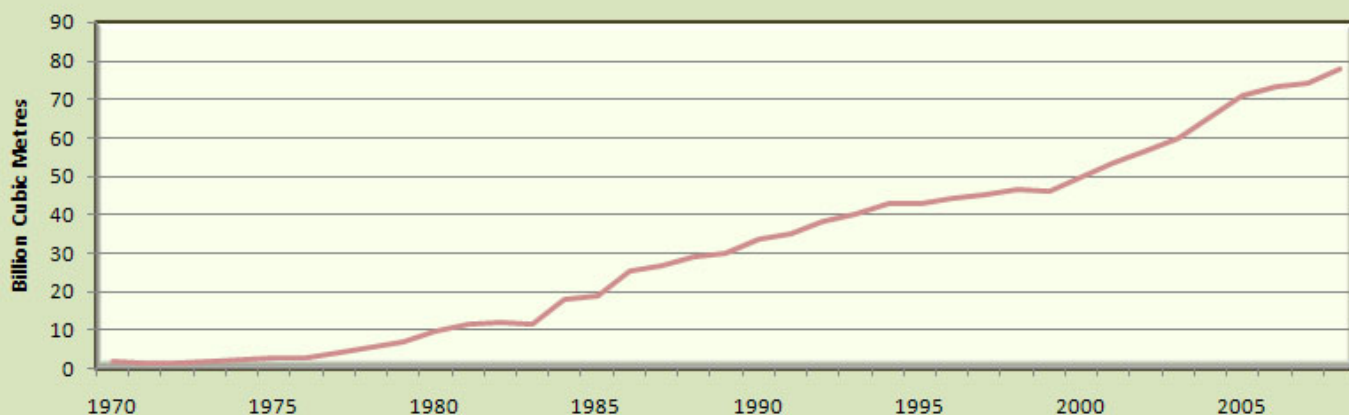




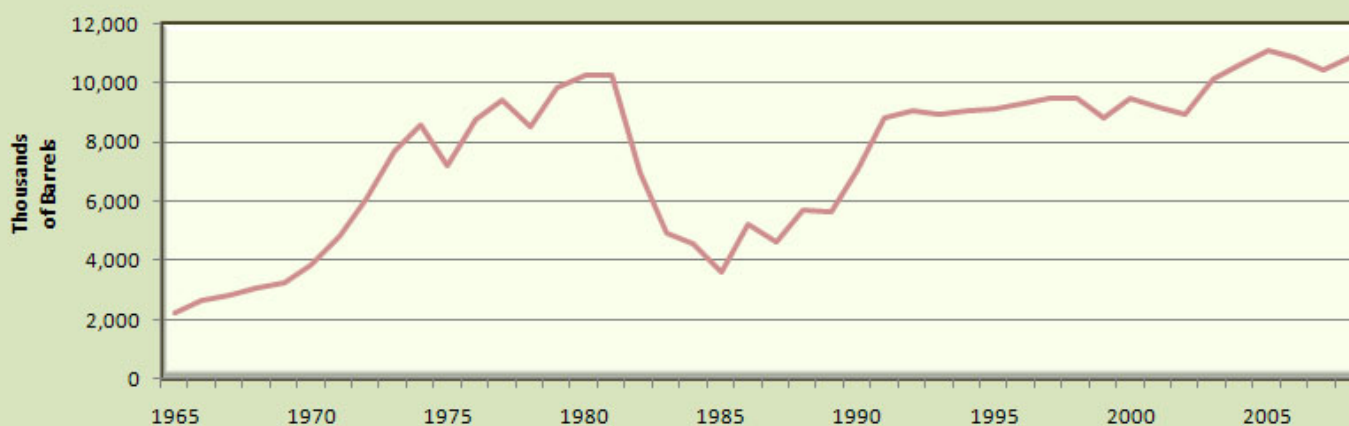


# Energy

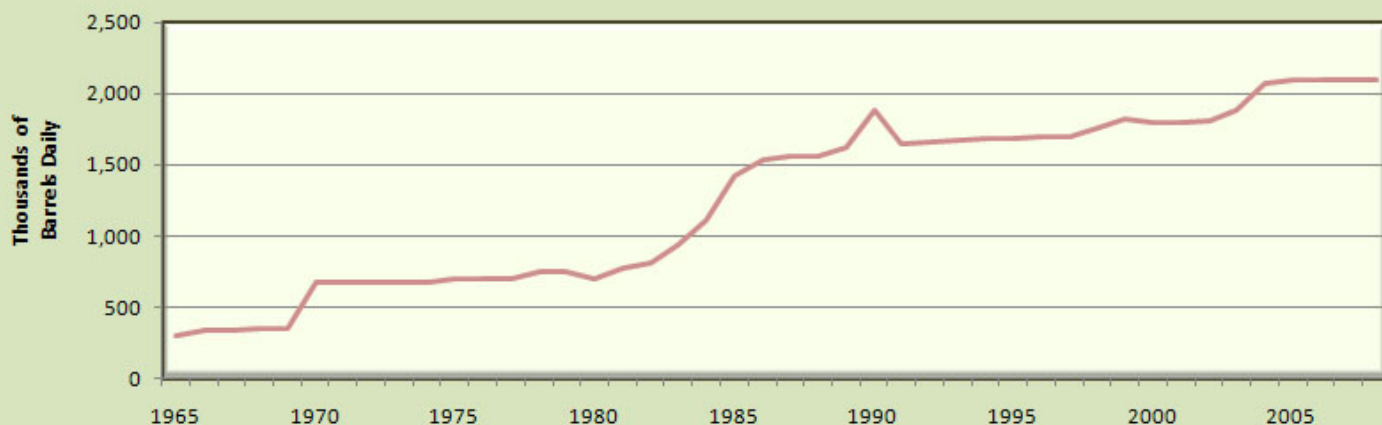
## Saudi Arabia's Natural Gas Production



## Saudi Oil Production

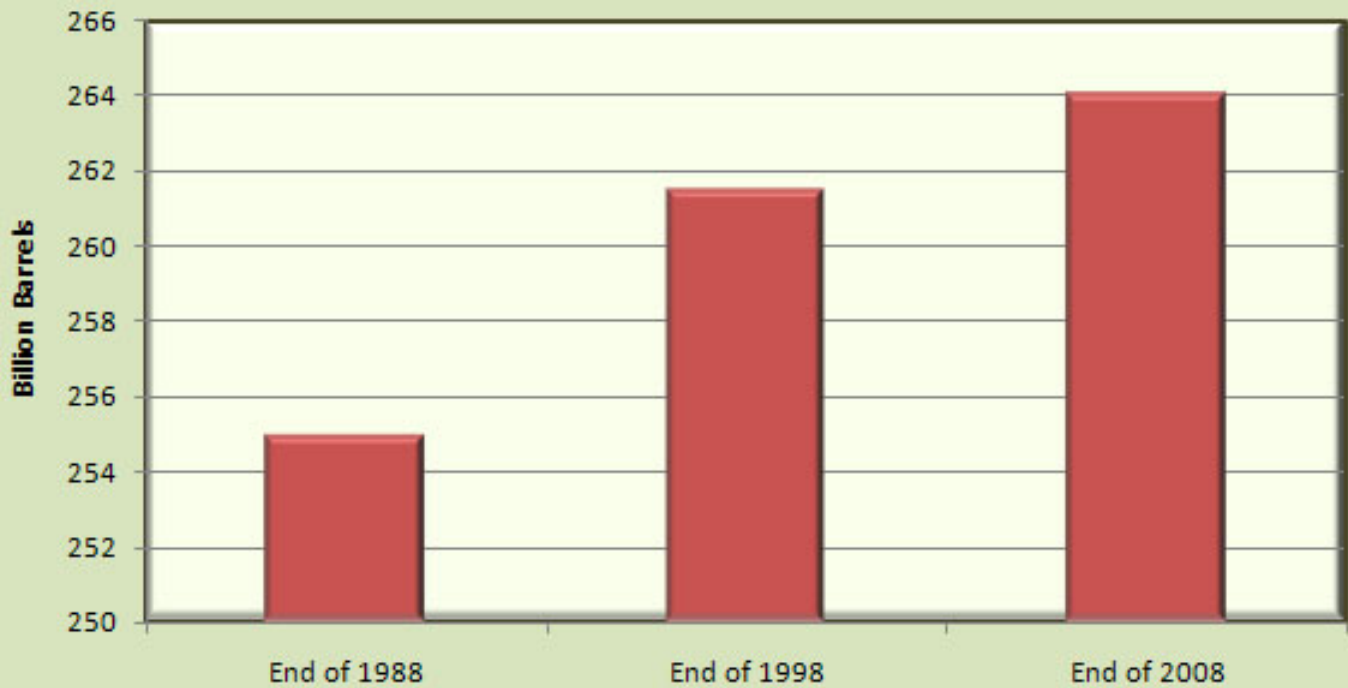


## Saudi Oil Refinery Capacity

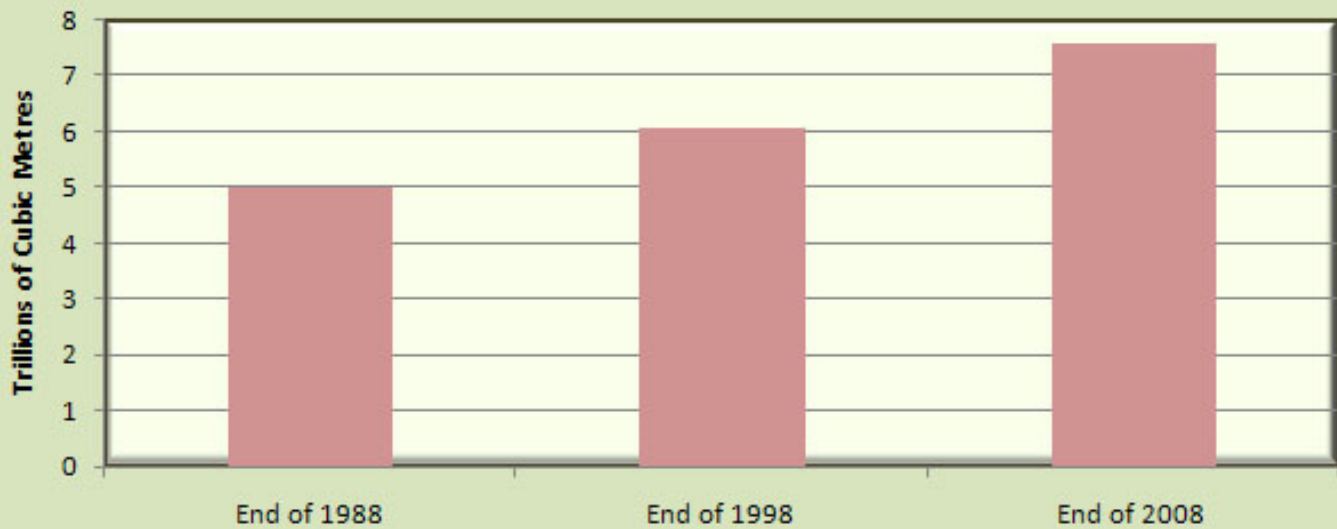


All energy statistics are from the BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2009.

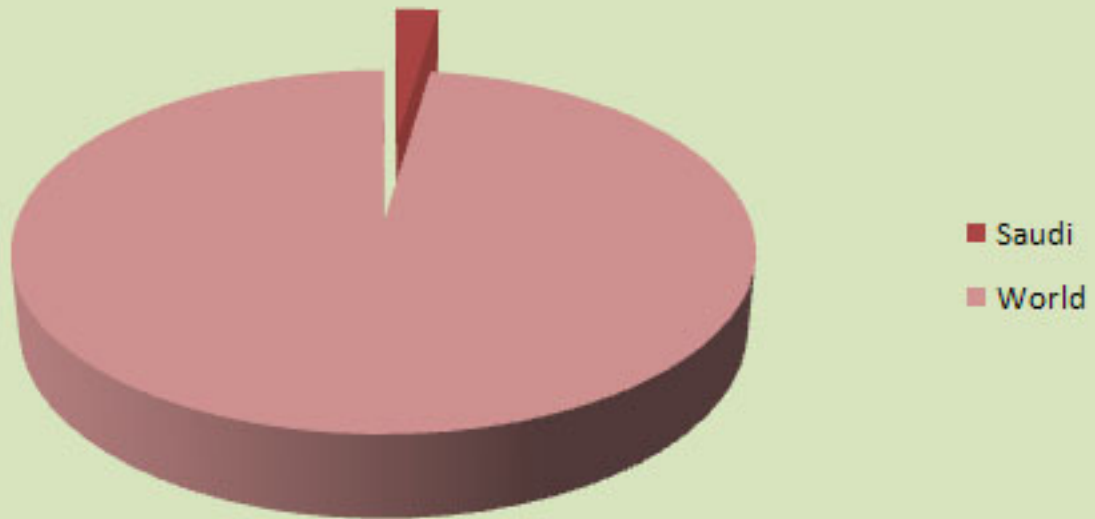
## Saudi Arabia's Proved Oil Reserves



## Saudi Arabia's Natural Gas Proved Reserves



### Saudi Arabia's Share of World Refinery Capacity at the End of 2008



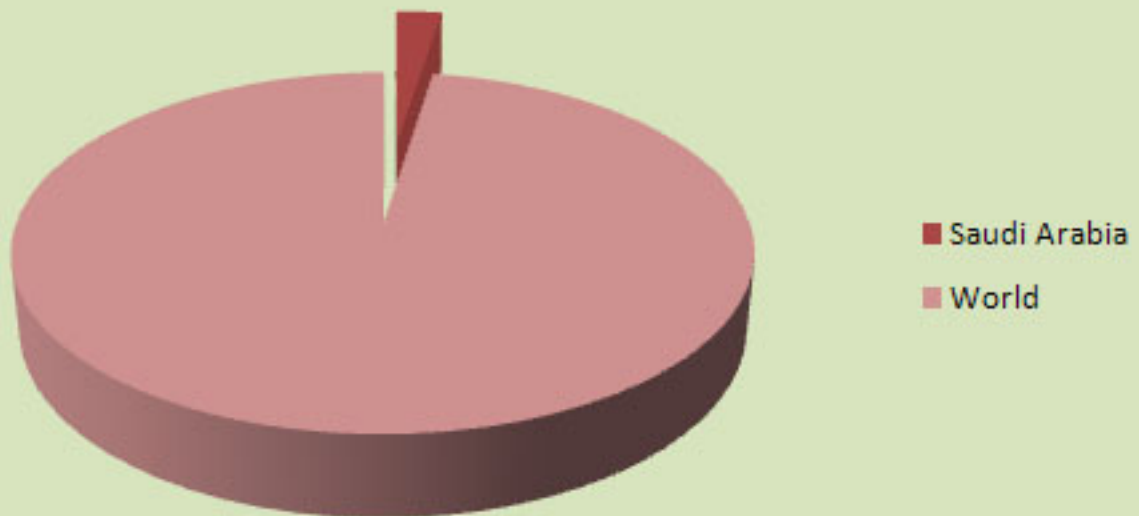
### Saudi Arabia's Share of World Oil Production at the End of 2008



### Saudi Arabia's Share of World Proved Natural Gas Reserves at the End of 2008

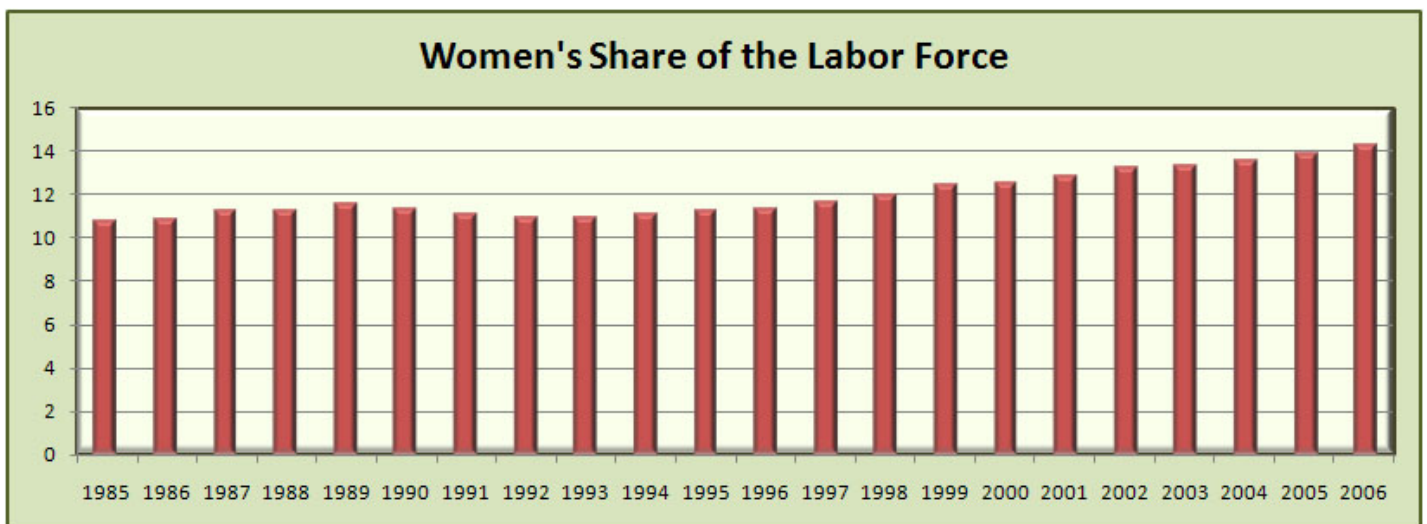
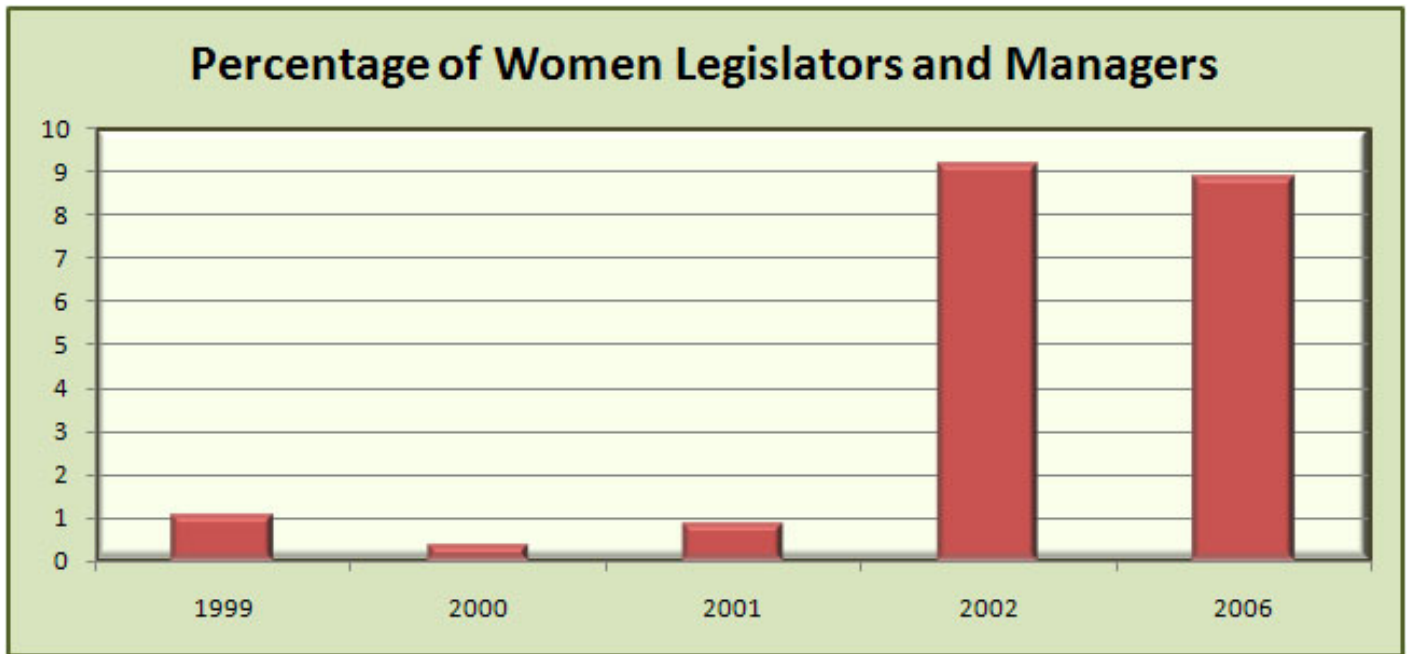


### Saudi Arabia's Share of World Natural Gas Production at the End of 2008





# Gender



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