

**Threats to Religious Legitimacy and State Security:
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Quest for Stable Continuity**

تهديد المصداقية الدينيّة و أمن الدولة:
صراع المملكة العربية السّعوديّة لإستمراريّة الأمن و الإستقرار

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

*Master of Arts
in
Political Science*

September 5, 2005
Blacksburg, VA

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Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Terrorism, Foreign Policy, Threat, Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Saudi Arabia responds to threats posed to its dynastic survival with specific emphasis on the current threat posed by Islamism. Saudi Arabia needs both religious legitimacy and state security in order to ensure the stability and continuity of the Kingdom. These needs produce a recurrent tension within the Saudi foreign policy framework because they pull in opposing directions. These tensions become particularly acute when the Kingdom is faced with a grave threat to either its religious legitimacy or its state security. Two cases studies are used to illustrate the Saudi Arabian response to threat. The Pan-Arab movement of the 1950s and 1960s threatened Saudi Arabia's religious legitimacy, and the 1991 Kuwait War threatened Saudi Arabia's state security. The Kingdom was able to endure these threats by balancing the resulting tensions. Historically, Saudi Arabia has only had to manage one type of threat at a time; however, Islamism represents an unprecedented threat because it simultaneously endangers Saudi Arabia's state security and religious legitimacy and to a greater degree than past threats. Islamism is qualitatively more intense because it combines dimensions that had previously been separate and manageable by the Kingdom. This thesis argues that since Islamism is confining the space for political maneuverability, Saudi Arabia faces its most serious threat to stable continuity – a danger which might undermine the Kingdom if a change to threat response is not made.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Edward Weisband for his boundless support of this project. His initial reservations were quickly replaced by an appreciation of my work that manifested itself in intense criticisms of my writing. His comments served to continually keep me focused and to keep my writing clear and organized. Having gratefully worked with him on his research projects for the last several years, it has been rewarding to have him take such an active interest in my work. I cannot thank him enough for his continued support.

In addition, I would like to thank my other committee members, namely Dr. William Ochsenwald and Dr. Charles Taylor. Dr. Ochsenwald meticulously read every word of this thesis to double-check dates, spellings, and syntax. His attention to detail helped ensure my factual accuracy and correctness. Complimenting Dr. Ochsenwald's precision, Dr. Taylor made sweeping (and much needed) comments concerning the organizational analysis and structure of the thesis. These two kinds of criticism were immensely helpful as I tried to write as well and as thoughtfully as I could.

Overall, my committee was a gift because they allowed me the space to make this thesis my own, yet each member showed an exceptional interest in my topic and contributed in his own distinctive way to my writing. For this, I am indebted to each of them.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my parents. My mother's support for my educational ambitions has been unwavering, and her confidence in my abilities has been a constant motivation for my perseverance. My father's often unspoken, yet always firm support of my political and international interests has remained a guiding force since I was a small child. I am grateful to them both for their encouragement and support.

TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration system in this thesis employs English usages more often than the original Arabic; however, I am careful to respect certain components of the Arabic language. For example, transliterated words will not include the English letters *-e*, *-o*, or *-g*. Also, when shortening names, I will be sure to include the Arabic word ‘*Abd*’ since it specifically refers back to the following of Allah. I will not show long vowels, the *ð* (taa’ marbutah), or the letter *ع* (‘ayn). In addition, I will not distinguish between “soft” and “hard” letters. Diphthongs will be transliterated as ‘aw’ or ‘ay.’ For example: King Faysal or Saddam Husayn. Locations, such as city names, will be spelled according to the 2005 CIA Factbook (even if the spelling violates the rules outlined above).

ABBREVIATIONS

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ICG	International Crisis Group
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

The threat posed by Islamism is one that shakes the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and might topple it. Since the end of World War II, Saudi Arabia has remained one of the most stable states in the Middle East. The current Saudi state has faced threats over the last century, but none so critical as to threaten the survival of the state. However, the threat of Islamism is unique in its ability to constrict the Saudi Arabia's political maneuverability. This thesis seeks to explain the nature of the unprecedented threat of Islamism against Saudi Arabia and its implications for the stable continuity of the Saudi dynasty.

Literature Review

Most academic and diplomatic writers have a predisposition about Saudi Arabia and the Arab Middle East. This ultimately comes across as bias, and there are several main types. First, there are the critics of the Kingdom, many of whom are Arabs now living in the West, who argue vehemently against the rule of the Saudi royal family. One such example is As'ad Abukhalil, the author of The Battle for Saudi Arabia. Second, there are the loyalists of the Kingdom whose praise for the King lines the pages of their books or articles. An example might be Sulayman Nyang and Evan Hendricks' book called A Line in the Sand. Third, there are the Western academics, like Bernard Lewis and Stephen Schwartz, who attempt to shed themselves of bias but still carry a Western air in their writings. Writers who publish under public policy institutes with a particular bias, such as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, are also within this category. Finally, there are the Middle Eastern academics or diplomats such as Dore Gold, a top advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, and Barry Rubin, an Israeli academic, whose arguments reflect a predisposition about the Arab world that veers away from objectivity. My note to the reader is merely that I have been aware of these biases, and I have attempted to peer through them. Having bias in a book or article does not mean the factual content is erroneous – it merely means that it must be double-checked against other sources. I have tried to use biased articles and books carefully and limitedly. Where bias exists too heavily, I have discarded the source. Unfortunately, almost every source falls into one of these categories of bias. This thesis attempts to stand in contrast to the current literature by

being neither loyalist nor foe and by evaluating Saudi Arabia policy by the standards of stability and continuity.

Relatively little is written about the foreign policy or diplomacy of Saudi Arabia outside of historical narratives. Those who do write about Saudi Arabian foreign policy usually contextualize it within the greater Middle East or by the Kingdom's relationship with the United States.¹ More recently, in the wake of September 11, 2001, some have written about the role of Saudi Arabia in the financing and support of terrorist groups.² Few have assessed Saudi Arabian foreign policy in its own right, and those who do have a limited analytical perspective. Either they focus exclusively on the security dimensions of the Saudi state,³ or they simply argue that Saudi Arabian foreign policy faces tensions in attempting to balance competing interests.⁴

Academics who focus solely on the security dimensions of Saudi Arabia usually adhere to a prototypical classical realist assessment of the Kingdom and its foreign policy. This type of study is useful but limited. Understanding the Saudi aspects of state security is only half of the equation. The other half which must be studied is the struggle for the Kingdom's legitimacy. A complete analysis of Saudi foreign policy cannot be accomplished unless these two dimensions are equally incorporated. Even classical realists would welcome a bi-modal analysis, because if Saudi Arabia wishes to survive, it must not only protect its security, but equally its religious legitimacy. The study of Saudi Arabian foreign policy, therefore, should be multi-dimensional.

To their credit, some who study Saudi Arabia use a multi-dimensional model to analyze the Kingdom's foreign policy. They argue in one form or another that Saudi Arabia must deal with several levels simultaneously in its foreign policy-making, including the international system level, the regional level, and the domestic level.⁵ Most writers agree with this basic analysis of Saudi foreign policy, but only one or two have taken the analysis further.⁶ It is

¹ Too many examples exist to list them all here. Here are two examples of books written about the relationship with the United States: Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Thomas Lippmann, *Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004).

² Two examples: Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud* (New York: Scribner, 2004); Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003).

³ J.E. Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁴ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

⁵ F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

⁶ The most in-depth, analytical writers on Saudi Arabia are F. Gregory Gause, III and Anthony Cordesman.

apparent that Saudi Arabia balances opposing elements in its foreign policy, but this does little to explain the Kingdom's particular response to any event. In addition, this multi-dimensional framework may help to clarify the routine foreign policy of the state, but it is less helpful to elucidate what happens during a period laced with threat.

Those who study Saudi Arabia are missing an essential analytical link if they attempt to explain the Kingdom's response to Islamism without a historical understanding of how Saudi Arabia perceives and deals with threat. When such a link is made, one can see that the threat posed by Islamism is not merely a problem or risk for the Kingdom, but rather, an unprecedented threat that might depose the current Saudi regime, and at the least, fundamentally alter the nature of response to threat.

Research Question

This thesis seeks to examine how Saudi Arabia responds to threats posed to its religious legitimacy and state security with specific emphasis on the current threat posed by Islamism. I argue that Saudi Arabia's need for religious legitimacy and state security produces a recurrent tension within its policy framework because these needs pull in opposing directions. The Kingdom aligns itself with the United States to attain security and with fundamentalist political Islam to attain legitimacy, but these two elements are incongruent. Many Islamic fundamentalists overwhelmingly detest the United States because of its policies in the Middle East, and the United States sees Islamic fundamentalism as the seed of human rights violations and terrorism. Despite finding itself in this precarious position, Saudi Arabia has historically been able to balance this friction.

However, this tension becomes particularly acute when the Kingdom is faced with a grave threat to either its state security or religious legitimacy. I intend to use case studies to analyze the Saudi Arabian response to threat. I have chosen events due to the particular type of threat they posed to the Kingdom. The Pan-Arab movement of the 1950s and 1960s represented a threat to Saudi Arabia's religious legitimacy, while the 1991 Kuwait War threatened Saudi Arabia's state security. A study of these events shows that Saudi Arabia balances two opposing tensions by aligning with political Islam when its religious legitimacy is threatened and aligning with the United States when its state security is threatened.

Historically, a balancing of tensions has worked for Saudi Arabia because it has only had to manage one type of threat at a time. For example, the Kuwait War posed both a state security threat and, in response to the Kingdom's request for assistance from the United States, a religious legitimacy threat arose. Despite facing two threats, the Kingdom was able to deal with the state security threat first, and then readjust its policies after the War to deal with the religious legitimacy threat. However, Islamism represents an unprecedented threat because it simultaneously endangers Saudi Arabia's state security and religious legitimacy and to a greater degree than past threats. Islamism is qualitatively more intense because it combines dimensions that had previously been separate and manageable by the Kingdom.

Since the primary goal of Saudi Arabia is dynastic survival, the royal family wishes to maintain the stability and continuity of the Kingdom. This thesis argues that since Islamism is confining the space for political maneuverability, the Kingdom faces its most serious threat to stable continuity – a danger which might undermine the Kingdom if a change to threat response is not made.

Framework of Thesis

Threat Perception

An analysis of threats to Saudi Arabian regime stability should begin with Saudi Arabia's own perception of threat. Saudi Arabia has two principal needs which are stability and continuity. In order to maintain the stable continuity of the Kingdom, Saudi Arabia must protect its state security and its religious legitimacy. Due to the volatile nature of the Middle East region and the nebulous nature of Saudi borders, the state security of Saudi Arabia is never entirely assured. When threatened, the Kingdom relies on the military support of the United States even if this momentarily compromises its religious legitimacy. This was the case with the Kuwait War in 1991. The Kingdom's religious legitimacy comes from two sources. First, as with any state, Saudi Arabia must attain legitimacy from its polity. Second, due to its role as the guardian of Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia needs legitimacy from the wider Muslim world. Allying with the Islamic fundamentalist sect called Wahhabism⁷ has achieved both of these goals. Presumably, if the state is allied with a strict fundamentalist sect of Islam, it will attain

⁷ This term is controversial in Saudi Arabia. Opponents to the 18th Century movement called the followers "Wahhabis," but the followers called themselves "unitarians" (*muwahiddun*) meaning they believed in the unity of God (*tawhid*). See Liesl Graz, *The Turbulent Gulf* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1990), 112.

legitimacy from its Muslim people and the wider Muslim world because it is more difficult to question such extreme faithfulness. Therefore, when the legitimacy of the state is threatened, the Kingdom aligns itself more closely with political and fundamentalist Islam. Such was the case when Arab nationalism threatened the religious legitimacy of the Saudi state.

Arab Nationalism & Pan-Arabism

Until now, the most serious threat Saudi Arabia faced since 1945 to its religious legitimacy came in the form of Arab nationalism and the subsequent Pan-Arab movement in the late 1950s and 1960s. Egypt's Jamal Abd al-Nasir [Nasser] promoted Arab nationalism which created a rivalry between the "new" revolutionary regimes, like Egypt, and the "old" monarchies, including that in Saudi Arabia. Arab nationalists argued that the monarchies displayed "backward social and cultural values, stagnant religiosity...and subservience to foreign imperialism."⁸ In this way, Arab nationalism threatened religious legitimacy and questioned its careful balancing of tensions between the United States and the Arab world. In addition, the subsequent rise of Pan-Arabism met with popular support within Saudi Arabia, creating a legitimacy crisis for the Kingdom. A Pan-Arab identity threatened to replace the Islamic Wahhabi identity Saudi Arabia had constructed. In response to this threat, Saudi Arabia proposed the formation of the Islamic Conference Organization to balance the Abd al-Nasir-dominated League of Arab States (Arab League). The Organization of the Islamic Conference was an attempt to shift the power balance that existed in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia attempted to create a new institution more suited to political Islam than Arab nationalism.

1991 Kuwait War

Just as Arab nationalism was the most serious legitimacy crisis faced by Saudi Arabia, the Kuwait War in 1991 was the most grave security threat. This threat manifested itself in two ways. First, Saudi Arabia thought Iraq might invade it. Just as Saddam Husayn [Hussein] had toppled the monarchy in Kuwait, he might deem this possible in Saudi Arabia. Even if Husayn's goal was not to depose the Saudi dynasty, he might at least be interested in gaining control of oil in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia for purposes of having more control in the Organization

⁸ R. Stephen Humphrey, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 62.

of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).⁹ Second, the borders between many Middle Eastern countries are ambiguous since state lines were demarcated arbitrarily by imperial powers. In response to this threat, Saudi Arabia invited American troops to be stationed on Saudi soil. Though this was sure to cause outrage among its subjects, Saudi Arabia allowed its security to momentarily take precedence over its legitimacy. However, at the conclusion of the War, the Kingdom's attention quickly shifted to the internal dissent. While the Kuwait War had been an unprecedented threat to state security, the backlash by Saudi subjects to its response represented the most extensive religious legitimacy crisis the Kingdom had faced since Arab nationalism. Reflecting the general belief of the society, a leading scholar argued that the United States represented a larger threat than Saddam Husayn.¹⁰ Saudi Arabia attempted to maintain its stability by allowing for political reform at the conclusion of the War. To ensure its state security, the Kingdom overruled the opposition during the war by requesting the United States' assistance, but at the conclusion of the War, the Kingdom's attention shifted to securing its religious legitimacy through a number of reforms.

Despite characterizing these two events as separate, one should understand that the tensions that threaten the religious legitimacy of Saudi Arabia have remained fairly constant. The complaints that were expressed during the Pan-Arab movement were quite similar to those presented in the aftermath of the Kuwait War. Ultimately, they are the same grievances expressed by Usama bin Ladin [Osama bin Laden] and the Islamists. Over time, these tensions have intensified; therefore, much of bin Ladin's influence is due to his ability to cultivate these preexisting strains.

Islamism

Having analyzed Saudi foreign policy in response to threat, this thesis will apply the analysis to the current threat posed by Islamists, both reformists and radicals (including Usama bin Ladin and al-Qaida [al-Qaeda]). Despite Saudi Arabia having endured Arab nationalism and the Kuwait War (among other threats), questions regarding its religious legitimacy and its inability to protect itself still exist. Islamists have been able to capitalize on this to amplify the legitimacy crisis within the Kingdom. In addition, they have been successful in threatening the

⁹ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 163.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

security of the state through attacks in Dhahran, Riyadh, Jiddah¹¹, and elsewhere. These attacks do not just target Westerners, but increasingly, they target Saudi subjects. An analysis of bin Ladin's communications shows his justification of such attacks as framed in Islamic ideology.¹² In this way, bin Ladin is seeking to dismantle the Islamic identity propagated by the government to create a new, more 'pure' identity. The attacks on the Kingdom no longer represent a mere internal insurgency, but rather, an international insurgency powerful enough to gravely confront the security of the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia faces an intense threat to its existence because its security has historically come from the United States, but in requesting the assistance of such an ally, the Kingdom marginalizes its own population which threatens its religious legitimacy. The balancing of tensions which has thus far worked to keep the Kingdom stable is severely jeopardized by this new Islamist threat.

Conclusion

As it confronts Islamism, Saudi Arabia seeks to sustain the monarchy and provide stability within the Kingdom. As my analysis will demonstrate, this goal of stable continuity can only be achieved if the Kingdom allows for low-level political reform. Some degree of political openness creates space for the expression of grievances or political desires in a way that marginalizes radical groups. Saudi Arabia has chosen two separate and incompatible response patterns which it uses depending on the nature of threat. If there is a legitimacy threat, the Kingdom creates distance with the United States, uses multilateral methods to counter the threat (assuming it is external), asserts its Islamic nature, and if necessary, allows for the perception of internal political reform. If there is a security threat, the Kingdom uses multilateral methods as pressure and relies on the United States' military for protection. Since Islamism represents the integration of religious legitimacy and state security threats, the Kingdom cannot use the response methods outlined because they are mutually contradictory in some ways. In addition, the legitimacy and security threats facing the Kingdom are no longer just internal or external – they are both simultaneously. These points of analysis lead to the conclusion that Saudi Arabia must change its response methods; specifically, it must open its society politically if it wishes to maintain stable continuity in the future.

¹¹ The "h" at the end of Jiddah is a *taa' marbutah*. The CIA Factbook spells the name of this city as such.

¹² Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc, 2004), 132-161.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF THREAT IN SAUDI ARABIA

A social science literature focused primarily and analytically on the concept of threat has not developed in international relations discourse; instead, scholars tend to concentrate on the nature of security with threat as a mere component. For instance, Richard Ullman argues, “Security is defined and valorized by the threats which challenge it.”¹ This thesis is an attempt to re-center the discussion on the perception of and response to threat and away from the concept of security. I suggest a conceptual framework for understanding both perception and response which allows for an exploration of the role of threat in Saudi Arabian foreign policy-making.

Security Studies & Threat

Security studies have dealt with the concept of threat but only as a component of the broader study of security. The study of security was initially framed by realist assessments of the Cold War. Traditional scholars, such as Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, and Robert Jervis,² define security “in terms of the physical safety of a given state from external threats”³ and advocate “the primacy of the military element...in the conceptualization of security” and threat.⁴ Non-traditionalists, such as Peter Katzenstein, Richard Ullman, and Johan Eriksson, argue that this creates a “false sense of reality” that tends to ignore non-military threats that may be equally or more dangerous.⁵ They have expanded the discussion of security “from material capabilities to ideational factors” such as culture and ideology.⁶ Traditionalists argue that “defining the field in this way...destroy[s] its intellectual coherence” because it makes security studies too broad.⁷ The traditionalists have developed a clear framework for understanding military threats, but the non-

¹ Richard Ullman, "Redefining Security," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983): 133.

² Robert Jervis, "Security Regimes," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982); John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

³ Zeev Maoz, "Domestic Politics of Regional Security: Theoretical Perspectives and Middle East Patterns," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 3 (Sept 2003): 20.

⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 1.

⁵ Johan Eriksson, *Threat Politics* (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd., 2001); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 7-11; Ullman, "Redefining Security," 129.

⁶ Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security*, 27.

⁷ Stephen Walt as quoted in Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 3.

traditionalists understand that military threats are only one kind of threat. Therefore, to be useful, an analysis of threat within Saudi Arabia should contain elements of both the specific, state-centric approach of the traditionalists and the more general, ideological approach of the non-traditionalists.

In favor of traditional, realist thought, an analysis of threat within Saudi Arabia will remain state-centric. Saudi Arabia will be treated as a unitary actor against which threat is directed. Neorealists have theoretical reasons for treating nation-states as undifferentiated, unitary actors, but in the case of Saudi Arabia, there are practical reasons.⁸ Saudi Arabia, by its nature as a dynastic monarchy, has a highly centralized decision-making process. The Kingdom's response to threat, therefore, is determined by a small group of people. According to leadership-dominant and groupthink theories, personality and the perceptions of individuals within a small group play a role in the nature of the decision made.⁹ Therefore, hypothetically, if the actors in the group were to change, then the character or the pattern of decision-making would change. Indeed, the decision-making actors within the Saudi regime have changed since the end of World War II (most often through death), yet "Saudi foreign policy has been remarkably constant over the last few decades."¹⁰ Since Saudi Arabia is state-centric in its own approach to governance, an analysis of the Kingdom should retain this reasoning.¹¹ It would be impractical to study Saudi Arabia from a non-statist point of view.

Within the state-centric approach, I distinguish between two types of threat. First, there can be a threat to state security which adheres closely to the traditionalist conception of threat. Second, there can be a threat to the religious legitimacy of the state which reflects a non-traditional view of threat. If the physical security of the state or the religious legitimacy of Saudi Arabia is threatened, it endangers the survival of the Kingdom. The differentiation between state security and religious legitimacy threats is a matter of definition. Specifically, a threat to state security constitutes a military threat, while a threat to religious legitimacy is a non-military,

⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁹ Glenn P. Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), 248-253; Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982).

¹⁰ Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 34.

¹¹ For a critique of state-centric approaches, see Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 93-123. His critique is well-justified in many cases, but for Saudi Arabia, a state-centric approach remains the most useful.

political danger.¹² This is not a matter of degree. In other words, military threats are not necessarily more dangerous than non-military threats. I maintain the dichotomy of ‘state security’ and ‘religious legitimacy’ instead of distinguishing between military and non-military threats for one primary reason. Referring to threats as military or non-military inevitably puts military threats at the center of the discussion in the same way that discussions of Western and non-Western nation-states ultimately centers the discussion on the West. Creating a more specific language is an attempt to break out of the military-centric tradition in security studies. A threat to state security falls into the traditional definition of security whereas a threat to religious legitimacy uses a wider, non-traditional definition of threat.¹³

This dual conception of threat is supported by Richard Ullman. He defines two kinds of threat. One “drastically...degrade[s] the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state.” This definition parallels my conception of a state security threat which specifically refers to military or physical threats that endanger lives. Ullman’s second type of threat “significantly...narrow[s] the range of policy choices available to the government of a state....”¹⁴ This parallels my conception of a religious legitimacy threat which restricts the space for political maneuverability in Saudi Arabia. Both threats are dangerous to the survival of the Saudi dynasty.

Security studies help to establish a definition of threat, but these studies lack a concrete framework for understanding the politics of threat. Relying on Johan Eriksson’s work on ‘threat politics’ and fundamental international relations theory, I have conceptualized such a framework.

Threat Politics

A threat is a specifically targeted and imminent danger that seeks to do harm upon some object, in this case, the state. Defining threat this way avoids conflation with the concept of ‘risk.’ Unlike threats, risks are probabilities of harm that are generalized and always unknown.¹⁵ In a sense, one chooses to engage in risk whereas one does not choose to be threatened. The source of threat chooses its object, targets it, and intends harm. Threats are specific and known and thereby much more dangerous than risks. States engage in risk management all the time

¹² Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴ Both quotes are cited from Ullman, "Redefining Security," 129.

¹⁵ An extensive literature exists on the topic of risk which lies outside the scope of this thesis.

using preventive responses. When a risk becomes a threat, states engage in reactionary response. In analyzing Saudi Arabian foreign policy, I am interested in the Kingdom's reactionary response to threat, not the preventive measures it employs daily.

A study of threat politics begins with the image of threat. A threat image is a general perception of reality socially constructed as negative.¹⁶ Specifically, "threat images imply a sense of endangered values and a perceived inability to control events."¹⁷ Johan Eriksson argues that events, actors, and structural conditions lead to threat perception. However, he fails to clearly define a 'structural condition.' To avoid confusion with the neorealist definition of structure, the term 'process' more accurately describes a threat and reflects the proper level of analysis. A study of threat should focus on process but also be aware of actors as symbols of threat and events as manifestations of threat. Later chapters will examine historical processes that constituted threats to Saudi Arabia while paying careful attention to the influence of actors and events on the perception of threat.

Actors are a unique source of the threat image because they can be held accountable in a way that events and processes cannot. For example, they can be arrested and tried. Actors are themselves often a threat, and more importantly, they usually represent or symbolize a process that constitutes a graver threat. For example, Usama bin Ladin is seen by the United States as a threat, yet it is not only he who is the threat but also the process of terrorism that he represents. The government uses him as a symbol of the threat because they are able to hold someone accountable for terrorism. Therefore, the elimination of a particular actor does not necessarily alleviate the threat, though it may ease the perception of threat. For instance, the American public may feel more secure if bin Ladin were to be captured or killed, but it is likely that terrorism would continue. This becomes relevant when studying response to threat because the actual threat matters less than the perceived threat. Actors can often trigger the perception of a graver threat by being symbolic of a process.

Events are manifestations or mechanisms of threat. An event cannot be the source of threat but it is often the mechanism that brings the underlying threat to the attention of the government and population.¹⁸ Threat processes are less likely to have social salience until an event occurs. Again, the example of the United States demonstrates this. September 11, 2001

¹⁶ Eriksson, *Threat Politics*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

was a manifestation of threat. This event brought attention to the actor, Usama bin Ladin, and the process of terrorism that he symbolizes. Before the event, this actor and process were less obvious as threats to the general population and, arguably, to the government. This event also set in motion a particular set of responses. Therefore, events and actors are not the root causes of threat, but they do play an important role in the perception of and response to threat.

Unlike actors and events, processes can be the source of threat. Processes are patterns of interaction that extend beyond the unit level of analysis. In the context of this thesis, Pan-Arabism, political dissent, and Islamism will be considered processes that threaten Saudi Arabia. In all cases, these processes did not become the focus of response until a particular event brought the threat to the government and population's attention. Also, at the center of each of these processes stood an actor or actors who symbolized the threat, such as Jamal Abd al-Nasir during the Arab nationalist period. In studying the response of Saudi Arabia to threat, one must be aware of the actors, events, and processes that lead to threat and most importantly, threat perception.

Threats to Saudi Arabia

Whether the threat is actual or imagined is relatively unimportant when studying response. Response to threat is determined according to perception. Therefore, an analysis of threat perception should begin with an explanation of who the object of threat is and who is charged with responding to threat. A threat to Saudi Arabia is measured by its capacity to endanger dynastic preservation. In fact, the ultimate goal of Saudi Arabian policy is the stable continuity of its monarchy. State security and religious legitimacy threats have tended to jeopardize dynastic survival and stability.¹⁹ Therefore, it is these two types of threat that have historically provoked response from the Kingdom.

Stable Continuity

Stability and continuity are essential for the dynastic survival of Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, the need for the stability of the Kingdom reflects a greater wish than that which is

¹⁹ F. Gregory Gause, III supports this argument in his paper, though he uses the terminology of 'regime security' and 'domestic stability.' See F. Gregory Gause, III, "Attempts to Understand Saudi Foreign Policies from Theoretical Perspectives" (Transcript of "Saudi Arabia: One Hundred Years Later" Conference, Hosted by Georgetown University, 1999).

internal to the royal family. The conceptual foundation of the phrase ‘stable continuity’ indicates the desires of both the royal family and the world. The stability of Saudi Arabia, currently provided by the monarchic system, is crucial to world economic markets due to the centrality of Saudi Arabia with regard to oil supply. The continuity of the royal family’s rule is important to outside states only to the extent that it provides stability. Yet to the royal family, continuity is the key to dynastic survival. Therefore, while this thesis leaves the analytical discussions of oil and its politics to other scholars, it begins with an understanding that the underlying interest in scholarship on Saudi Arabia is due to the global importance of oil. Threats to the stable continuity of the Kingdom are not a problem left only to the royal family, but rather, they represent a dilemma to all of the major players in the world economy and world politics.

Religious Legitimacy Threats

In order to preserve the Saud dynasty, Saudi Arabia must not only protect its state security, but it must ensure that it remains legitimate as the guardian of Mecca and Medina among its subjects and the Muslim world community. Threats to Saudi religious legitimacy represent the second type of threat facing Saudi Arabia historically and presently.

The religious legitimacy of Saudi Arabia is based on its association with Wahhabism, one of the most conservative movements within Islam. In the Eighteenth Century, the founder of Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman Al Saud, allied himself with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was well-versed in the law and theology of Islam. Disenchanted with what he perceived as the moral decline of society, he lectured for the need to return to the basic teachings of the Quran. While opponents to the religious movement called his followers “Wahhabis,” the followers called themselves “unitarians” (*muwahiddun*) meaning they believed in the unity of God (*tawhid*).²⁰ Al Saud’s military prowess combined with the religious zeal of Abd Al-Wahhab brought the many tribes of Arabia under one rule.²¹ Opponents criticized Wahhabism for being too restricting and uncompromising. However, it is this strict conservatism that has convinced many in the Muslim community to grant Saudi Arabia legitimacy as the guardian of Mecca and Medina.

²⁰ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47.

²¹ William Ochsenwald, "Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 3 (August 1981): 273.

The Wahhabi tradition continues to pervade Saudi society and government, but the legitimacy it once brought the Kingdom is eroding for several reasons. First, notions of Pan-Arabism which arose in the mid-twentieth-century questioned the conservative and traditional nature of the Saudi monarchy in favor of modernization.²² These ideas continue to pervade Saudi society today, especially among the youth. Second, the profits amassed from the oil embargo in the 1970's emphasized perceptions of corruption at the higher echelons of the dynasty detracting from perceptions of religious piety. Finally, the continued relationship with the United States angers many Saudis who believe U.S. policies are anti-Muslim or anti-Arab. Peterson says, "More than ever, the central Saudi creed of Wahabism is regarded with suspicion ... and it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will be able to regard itself so authoritatively as the protector of Islam in the foreseeable future."²³

The latter two reasons are the primary motivations for radical Islam within Saudi Arabia. Members of organizations such as al-Qaida see a contradiction in the Kingdom's espousal of a strict form of Islam and its disreputable actions, especially with regard to the use of oil revenues and its relationship with the United States. Jamie Gorelick, a former member of the 9/11 Commission, argues that the Saudi government is "coming to grips with the Faustian bargain that they have made, which is that they have ceded whole parts of their government to religious elements that have...fomented the kind of activity...which creates conditions for people who agree with [al-Qaida] to function...against them."²⁴ The Kingdom responds to internal legitimacy threats by using repression, and it responds to external legitimacy threats by reasserting its Islamic religious identity.

State Security Threats

Due to the nebulous nature of Saudi borders, the wealth of oil contained within the country, and the volatile nature of the Middle East region, the state security of Saudi Arabia is never assured. Saudi Arabia has faced threats from almost all of its neighbors over the last seven decades including Egypt under Abd al-Nasir, Israel, Iraq under Saddam Husayn, Iran after 1979, and Yemen during the border dispute. Iraq, Iran, and Yemen remain threats though Iraq's political situation has changed since the U.S.-led Iraq War, and Iranian and Yemeni relations

²² Chapter 2 will discuss this in depth.

²³ Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 10.

²⁴ "Myths and Realities: Saudi Arabia Re-Examined," 7.

have improved over the last several years. In addition, the Kingdom must pay close attention to Arab-Israeli developments due to its close proximity to Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. Finally, the neighboring countries in Africa including Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan are unstable causing the Kingdom to worry about its Western border, especially the port city of Jiddah. It is for these reasons that, despite its geographic size and regional importance, Saudi Arabia continues to confront state security challenges.

To respond to these security issues, Saudi Arabia has built a military, but it remains relatively weak. Anthony Cordesman states, "The quality and quantity of military manpower has been one of the most important challenges that Saudi Arabia has faced...and it is a challenge that the Kingdom will continue to face...."²⁵ Therefore, when threatened, the Kingdom relies heavily on the military support of the United States. Even when there is not a direct threat, the United States remains stationed in Saudi Arabia at the Prince Sultan Air Base and elsewhere.²⁶ Though the Kingdom has attempted to limit U.S. deployments on its soil, it has typically agreed with U.S. policy toward its two primary threats, Iraq and Iran. The Kingdom has been dependent on the U.S. to contain both of these threats. Recently, however, Saudi and American policies have been disjointed. While Saudi Arabia has pursued a policy of rapprochement with Iran, the U.S. has used sanctions. Also, Saudi Arabia disapproved of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by U.S. forces.²⁷ Despite its recent differences, "Saudi Arabia's de facto alliance with the United States...cannot be replaced with any substitute approaching the same degree of military capability."²⁸ J.E. Peterson adds, "The difficulty of Saudi Arabia's position is that it appears to be surrounded by real or potential enemies, most of whom are bigger and more powerful. Thus the Kingdom must tread warily with its neighbors... while forging strong alliances with dependable powers."²⁹ For this reason and due to the mutual dependence on one another with regard to oil, the 'special' relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States will most likely continue for some time.

²⁵ Anthony Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, vol. 1, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 51.

²⁶ "Myths and Realities: Saudi Arabia Re-Examined" (Presented at The New Republic's Symposium on Public Policy, Hosted by The New Republic, Washington, D.C, October 27, 2004), 6; Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 63.

²⁷ Anthony Cordesman, *The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, vol. 2, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁹ Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 14.

Excepting the issues of oil and security, Saudi Arabia is diametrically opposed to the United States politically and socio-culturally. Joseph McMillan argues,

“In some ways Saudi Arabia is the antithesis of the United States.... We value pluralism; they value conformity. We value open debate...; they value the harmony and unity of the national community. We are very much a secular country, but there is obviously a very strong theocratic tendency within the way that Saudi Arabia is governed. What we have is a relationship based not on shared values but on shared interests....”³⁰

Therefore, Saudi Arabia and the United States usually cooperate for purposes of alliance maintenance rather than due to agreement. The most obvious example is Israel. Saudi Arabia has long opposed Israel over the issue of Palestine, yet the United States supports Israel militarily and financially. In addition, the United States opposes Saudi internal repression, the Saudi relationship with some of its neighbors (most recently, Iran), and the degree to which the Kingdom promotes Wahhabism. The issues of oil and state security, however, remain vital. Since oil represents the backbone of the Saudi economy, its protection ranks as one of the top security issues of the regime; simultaneously, the U.S. relies on the supply of oil and the regulation of prices that emerges from Saudi Arabia. Therefore, despite their differences, it is in the best interest of both states to continue their mutually dependent relationship.

Saudi Arabia’s Response to Threat

Barry Buzan argues, “The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them.”³¹ The measures Saudi Arabia uses to respond to state security and religious legitimacy threats are typically to either push away or pull closer the United States, to use multilateral tools, to trumpet Islam, or to enact the perception of political reform. These methods are often used simultaneously when facing a threat.

When the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia is questioned, the Kingdom distances itself from the United States. However, when the security of the state is threatened, the Kingdom requests the assistance of the United States usually with the assurance that it will leave as soon as the security crisis is resolved. Despite this assurance, the invitation of U.S. soldiers onto Saudi soil inevitably

³⁰ Joseph McMillan, Anthony H. Cordesman, Mamoun Fandy, and Fareed Mohamedi, "The United States and Saudi Arabia: American Interests and Challenges to the Kingdom in 2002" (Transcript of Twenty-Seventh Capitol Hill Conference Series on U.S. Middle East Policy, Hosted by Middle East Policy Council, Rayburn House Office Building, January 9, 2002) <http://www.mepc.org/public_asp/forums_chcs/27.asp>.

³¹ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 21.

leads to internal unrest. The typical response is repression of dissidents, though more recently the threat caused by unrest has become much graver thereby persuading the Kingdom to initiate measures of reform.

As an alternative or complimentary response, Saudi Arabia employs multilateral tools as a way of maintaining stability in the Middle East and ensuring its leadership role in Arab affairs. When Abd al-Nasir attempted to use the Arab League as a tool for Pan-Arabism, the Saudi dynasty reacted with the creation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which promoted Islamic solidarity over Arab solidarity. In the wake of aggressive Arab nationalism and the Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia led the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, now called the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. The GCC has remained more of a symbolic organization than a practical one due to the size of Saudi Arabia relative to the other members and due to conflicting interests among members.³² Saudi Arabia is also a member of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the United Nations. Multilateralism is more of a long-term preventive response that helps ensure the stability of the region in case of a crisis. However, in the midst of a threat against the dynasty, Saudi Arabia often uses its position as one of the leaders of the Middle East to its advantage. As a general rule, Saudi Arabia attempts to balance itself between its Middle East and Arab counterparts and the United States.

Finally, Saudi Arabia promotes Islam as the center of the state when it faces a threat. By employing the power invested in Islam, Saudi Arabia can attain legitimacy and provoke a sense of religious loyalty in times of war. The more fundamentalist the Kingdom, the less reformists are willing to question its actions. In so doing, the opposition could be accused of being un-Islamic. The royal family uses this to its advantage in times of threat.

Saudi Arabia's 'Faustian Bargain'

The metaphor of a 'Faustian bargain' is quite apt for Saudi foreign policy in general. Saudi Arabian foreign policy is full of such contradictions. Many of the actions taken by the government solve one problem while creating another. The Kingdom's need for state security and religious legitimacy is one such example. For purposes of oil and state security, Saudi Arabia must rely on the military power of the United States, yet it is this reliance and dependence

³² Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 26.

that causes its people to question its legitimacy. In addition, the promotion of a strict version of Islam helps to attain legitimacy for the Kingdom, but it also leads to radical elements within its society that seek to topple the Kingdom, and since September 11th, 2001, threatens the relationship with the United States. Historically, the Kingdom has managed to endure many security and legitimacy crises, yet doing so is becoming increasingly difficult. The next two chapters of this thesis will explore examples of security and legitimacy threats and the Saudi response. The final chapter will discuss the threat of Islamism as a fundamentally more powerful threat because it is constricting the political options employed in the past to respond to such threats. Even if the Islamists are unable to topple the Saudi regime, they will fundamentally compromise and alter the way in which Saudi Arabia responds to threat.

CHAPTER 2

THREAT TO RELIGIOUS LEGITIMACY: ARAB NATIONALISM

One of the fundamental analytical premises of this thesis is the exclusive nature of threat confronted historically by Saudi Arabia. Isolating the specific characteristics of the Kingdom's response to a religious legitimacy threat sheds analytical insight into the tensions resulting from such a threat. Saudi Arabia continually attempts to reaffirm its legitimacy by asserting its religious nature, but threats to its legitimacy arise when agents question the *raison d'être* of the state or the piety of the royal family. The Arab nationalist movement of the 1950s cast doubt on the religious legitimacy of the Kingdom; therefore, this movement represented a "threat to...Arab regimes by challenging their legitimacy, sovereignty, and internal stability."¹ The threat was specifically "targeted at the legitimacy of the government and not at the state's borders."² By examining Arab nationalism, I am able to limit my analysis to Saudi Arabia's response to a religious legitimacy threat in the absence of a simultaneous state security threat.

Collective Political Identity in the Arab Middle East

Western conceptions of collective political identity are typically rooted in the rhetoric of nationalism. A nation is a political culture which legitimizes a state's governance. Motivated (and often manipulated) by elites, nationalism arises from the people who then grant legitimacy to the hierarchy which governs them. The Western experience saw nationalist movements developed somewhat organically without direct imperialist intrusion. The League of Nations mandate system, however, attempted to establish a sense of nationalism in some parts of the Arab Middle East by imposing nation-building and state-building processes. These externally-driven processes failed. When many Western powers pulled out of their colonies and mandates in the Arab Middle East after World War II, the lack of a collective political identity "caused the

¹ Michael N. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 404.

² Michael N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 496. The United Arab Republic was a threat to the sovereignty and legitimacy of Saudi Arabia, but the state was never strong enough to constitute a state security threat. Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism remained an ideological threat rather than a security threat to the Kingdom.

region's inhabitants to reconsider their political identity.”³ Nationalism began to take root as a response to imperialism and gained salience after the withdrawal of the imperial power. Nationalist movements, though often conducted by elites, must be perceived as internally driven in order to gain legitimacy.

The prime example of nationalism in the Middle East arose out of Egypt in the form of Arab nationalism. This movement attempted to create a collective political identity in the wake of imperialism. The call for an Arab political identity threatened the conservative monarchies that promoted an Islamic political identity instead. In many ways, the Arab and Islamic identity constructions intersect since “Islam is one of the most powerful sources of Arab political [identity].”⁴ Despite the overlap, Egypt and Saudi Arabia politicized these two identities by creating a contrived discord between them in order to gain influence in the Arab world. The pitting of the nationalist states against the conservative monarchies effectively polarized inter-Arab politics into a progressive camp led by Egypt and a conservative camp led by Saudi Arabia.⁵

An Arab Collective Political Identity

The state system imposed on the Arab Middle East required, in the absence of the imperial power, a collective political and national identity to legitimate the state. Jamal Abd al-Nasir of Egypt understood this need and soon became the symbol of a nationalist movement that promulgated an Arab political identity. Arab nationalism rejected the sovereignty of the states artificially created by imperialism. The movement sought to transcend these artificial borders in the name of Arab unity. Similarly, a related movement called Pan-Arabism wanted to establish one Arab state based on nationalist principles. Michael Barnett says, “Once [many] Arab states gained independence in the mid-1940s, a defining issue in inter-Arab politics became how to reconcile the existence of the separate sovereign states and a pan-Arabism that viewed them as artificial and demanded their unification.”⁶ Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism were nationalist movements that accepted sovereignty as a concept but rejected the artificially imposed borders of Arab states. Though Saudi Arabia's borders were not forged by a Western mandate, the

³ Ibid.: 494.

⁴ Terrance G. Carroll, "Islam and Political Community in the Arab World," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 2 (May 1986): 186.

⁵ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 192.

⁶ Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," 494.

nationalists viewed them as artificial as well. The nationalists believed that the oil in Saudi Arabia and the two holy sites of Mecca and Medina should belong to all Arabs.⁷ The nationalist movement sought to transcend the contrived sovereign borders within the Arab Middle East to create one unified Arab state.

Propagated by the regimes in Egypt and Syria, the Arab political identity gained legitimacy as nationalist ideology. As with many nationalist movements, the sense of Arab unity was grounded somewhat in historical myth and collective forgetting. Arab nationalism “took its inspiration from the remote past when Arab hegemony stretched from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, conveniently overlooking the fact that this apparent solidarity more often than not consisted of a chain of independent and warring caliphates.”⁸ Historical fact was transformed into a myth of solidarity as a response to the profound sense of loss brought on by imperialism.

As part of the rejection of imperialism, the Arab nationalist movement called for a denunciation of Western powers, specifically Britain and France. For this reason, Abd al-Nasir chose to align himself with socialism through a relationship with the Soviet Union. Arab nationalism also called for the modernization of the Arab Middle East, although Abd al-Nasir argued that modernization could be attained without the assistance of the West. By disassociating modernization from Westernization, he could argue for the rejection of the West while simultaneously calling for such “Western” concepts as secularism. The Arab political identity, therefore, was symbolic of the desire to reject the West as the mode through which economic, social, and political modernization could be attained.

An Islamic Collective Political Identity

While Abd al-Nasir fought to cultivate an Arab political identity, Saudi Arabia fostered a collective political identity framed by Islamic principles. Regarding an Arab political identity, the Kingdom believed,

...their Arabness was such a self-evident fact that no theoretical elaboration was needed. Being of tribal stock, they thought of themselves as the real ethnically pure Arabs. While they recognized the special ties among Arab countries, they attributed them as much to religion and proximity as to Arabism. They did not recognize the mystical links

⁷ *Frontline: House of Saud*, 120 minutes, United States: Public Broadcasting Service, 2004, DVD.

⁸ John Major, "The Search for Arab Unity," *International Affairs* 39, no. 4 (October 1963): 551.

emanating from Arab nationalism. If unity was to be the goal, it should be based on Islam, rather than Arabism.⁹

This Islamic political identity, based in the Wahhabi tradition, was the root of regime legitimacy for Saudi Arabia. Crown Prince Faysal stated in 1960, “We have no other foundation than religion and faith.”¹⁰ Religion had been chosen by the founder of the current Saudi state, Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, as the source of legitimacy for the Kingdom because Islam was the only possible unifying force within the tribal-oriented Arabian peninsula. Much of Arab society, especially under the rule of the monarchies, remained tribal in the mid-century. A study conducted in the late 1950s showed that Arab and Muslim students across states ranked their loyalties in the following order: family/tribe, religion, ethnicity, political party, and finally, nationality.¹¹ Aware of the importance of tribe and religion over ethnicity and nationality, Saudi Arabia sought to continue its support of a tribal and religious identity. Upon solidifying his rule in 1928, Abd al-Aziz married one daughter from every tribal leader demonstrating the importance of uniting tribal orders under one banner.¹² The banner of Islam, as a means of unity and legitimacy, became a source of collective political identity within the Arab world that was now threatened by Arab nationalism.

Due to their tribal nature, those who adhered to an Islamic political identity favored traditional ways of life which stood in direct opposition to the call for modernization by Arab nationalists. In particular, the traditionalists opposed the secularism and socialism of Abd al-Nasir’s Egypt. Secularization sought to erase Islam from the political identity of Arab nations and from the governmental structures of Arab states. To fundamentalist Wahhabis, this was an atheistic and blasphemous ideology. Similarly, traditionalists opposed the Egyptian alliance with the Soviet Union since this superpower promoted not only a rejection of religion in politics, but also, atheism. The Arab nationalist message was a direct threat to the ideals of the Islamic political identity needed for Saudi Arabia’s regime legitimacy.

⁹ Ghazi A. Algosaihi, “The 1962 Revolution in Yemen and its Impact on the Foreign Policy of the UAR and Saudi Arabia” (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1970), 272 cited in Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 189.

¹⁰ Transcript of Press Conference of Crown Prince Faysal on January 23, 1960 as cited in "Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Saudi Arabia, 1960-1963 Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 786a, 886a, and 986a and Foreign Affairs, Decimal Numbers 686a and 611.86a," University Publications of America, 1960-1963.

¹¹ Carroll, "Islam and Political Community in the Arab World," 189.

¹² *Frontline: House of Saud*.

Saudi Arabia's Response to Threat

Despite the monarchy's push for an Islamic political identity, the Arab political identity won over a larger population of Arab people during the 1950s and 1960s, especially with the rise of Abd al-Nasir in Egypt.¹³ Since Arab nationalism called for a collective political identity that transcended the boundaries of states, it threatened the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Arab monarchies. It is within this framework that many scholars refer to the period of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s as a post-imperial battle between nationalism and sovereignty.¹⁴ The nationalists also called for modernization which threatened the traditional cultures within the Saudi Kingdom. Finally, the nationalists perceived any relationship with Western powers as siding with the imperialists. Since Saudi Arabia had a special relationship with the United States, this attack represented a legitimacy threat. Saudi Arabia preferred its traditional ways, its sovereignty, its relationship with the United States, and its Islamic political identity. In short, Egypt "denied the domestic legitimacy of the monarchical regimes and the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty upon which interstate relations were premised" while Saudi Arabia was "equally committed to preserving the status quo."¹⁵

Saudi Arabia's response to the legitimacy threat posed by Arab nationalism occurred in several ways. First, the Kingdom sought to balance its need for assistance from the United States with the avoidance of too close of a relationship; second, Saudi Arabia employed multilateral methods to counter the power invested in Egypt; third, the Kingdom strongly trumpeted its stature as an Islamic state; and fourth, the monarchy used subversive techniques to undercut the authority and abilities of the nationalists. The first three responses represent the monarchy's patterned way of responding to legitimacy threats; however, the fourth was due more to leadership incapacities than a calculated way of responding to threat.

¹³ Eric Hobsbawm's "threshold principle" holds that the bigger a nationalist movement is, the more social salience it has within a particular population. In this case, the Arab nationalists were more numerous than those who adhered to an Islamic identity. Therefore, Arab nationalism became a much more powerful movement for the next decade. See Eric Hobsbawm, "Whose Fault Line Is It Anyway?" *New Statesman and Society* 5, no. 199 (April 24, 1992).

¹⁴ Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," 492; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 124.

¹⁵ Maridi Nahas, "State-Systems and Revolutionary Challenge: Nasser, Khomeini, and the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 4 (November 1985): 513.

Balancing Act with the United States

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States has often caused legitimacy issues for the Kingdom. Much of the Arab world perceives Western countries as imperialists and, more recently, as infidels. However, Saudi Arabia often relies on the United States for protection and support when threatened. In return, the United States is guaranteed a supply of oil at relatively low prices. The arrangement is often referred to as an 'oil-for-protection' relationship. The simultaneous need for legitimacy from the Arab world and protection from the United States during the period of Arab nationalism caused the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia to resemble a fragile balancing act.

In the wake of the Suez crisis in the 1950s, United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower perceived the Middle East as a vacuum into which either the communism of the Soviet Union or the capitalism and influence of the United States would flow. Abd al-Nasir was beginning to ally Egypt more closely with the Soviet Union; in response, the United States offered to support Saudi Arabia financially and militarily "to oppose aggression by any state dominated by international Communism."¹⁶ King Saud bin Abd al-Aziz was enthusiastic in Washington about the Eisenhower Doctrine and its promise of \$180 million. However, the Kingdom attempted to moderate its enthusiasm in the Arab world to avoid being perceived as allied with the West.

The Saudi acceptance of the assistance offered by the United States was followed by a legitimacy crisis. The Kingdom was unable to appease Abd al-Nasir or its own people despite King Saud's attempts after the Doctrine was put in place. The Doctrine granted American assistance in training Saudi forces, provided military ground support and naval equipment, and allowed American soldiers to remain on Saudi territory at a base in Dhahran. Due to a public outcry, the contract for Dhahran was revoked in 1962.¹⁷ An American foreign service dispatch in 1960 stated, "The [Saudi] government recognizes the primacy of American interests in Saudi Arabia, but is sensitive that too close [of an] association with the United States might derogate from its sovereignty and bring criticism from its Arab neighbors."¹⁸ Saudi Arabia's response to threat in this regard was typical. When confronted with a legitimacy threat, the Kingdom

¹⁶ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 118.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹⁸ Foreign Service Dispatch from the Embassy in Jiddah dated December 19, 1960 as cited in "Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Saudi Arabia, 1960-1963 Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 786a, 886a, and 986a and Foreign Affairs, Decimal Numbers 686a and 611.86a."

downplays its relationship with the United States to avoid a domestic backlash. This particular domestic backlash was mild, so the Kingdom endured it; however, in the future, relations with the United States would cause the monarchy heightened legitimacy issues.

Multilateralism

Saudi Arabia encourages multilateral institutions and cooperation as a second foreign policy response to threat. Arab nationalism compelled Saudi Arabia to attempt to balance power against Egypt. Despite its cooperation with Egypt throughout the 1940s, the Kingdom perceived “Egypt as a natural rival for power and influence in the Arab world.”¹⁹ The rise of Abd al-Nasir through the Egyptian Revolution in 1952 only heightened the sense of threat.

In 1945, the Kingdom supported the formation of the League of Arab States (Arab League). In this organization, Saudi Arabia pushed for the maintenance of the sovereignty of states over Pan-Arab nationalist principles. In the end, the League sought a compromise by maintaining the sovereignty of its members while simultaneously forging a path for cooperation.²⁰ The Arab League Pact characterized the member states as “desirous of strengthening the close relations and numerous ties which link the Arab states and anxious to support and strengthen these ties upon a basis of respect for the independence and sovereignty of these states.”²¹ Though the nationalist states had hoped to use the Arab League as a stepping stone to unification, the League remained weak and fragmented due to rivalries between the nationalist and conservative camps that arose in the decades following its inception.

Saudi Arabia felt threatened by Abd al-Nasir’s domination of the Arab League. To counter the nationalist principles that guided the League, Saudi Arabia proposed the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Abd al-Nasir condemned the organization as imperialist and anti-Arab, but in 1969, twenty-five countries joined. The language of the organization continues to reflect its creation as a response to threat. The contemporary website for the Organization says it was “set up by the Kings and Heads of State and Government of Islamic States...[aware] of the necessity to establish an Organization embodying its aspirations and

¹⁹ Cordesman, *The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, 98.

²⁰ Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History*, 100.

²¹ Cecil A. Hourani, “The Arab League in Perspective,” *Middle East Journal* 1, no. 2 (April 1947): 125-136 cited in Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 123.

capable of carrying out its just struggle against the various dangers which threatened it and still persist.”²² This organization remained relatively powerless and marred by disagreements.²³

At first, the Kingdom wanted to show its support for Arab initiatives outwardly to avoid a backlash by its like-minded subjects. As a result, Saudi Arabia signed a security treaty with Egypt in 1955 and signed the “Treaty of Arab Solidarity” in early 1957 with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. This latter treaty backed Egypt against the imperialist powers.²⁴ Despite its appeasements, within a year, the threat of Arab nationalism had heightened, and Egypt and Syria became staunch enemies of the Kingdom.

The threat became intense when Egypt and Syria joined together to promote Arab nationalist principles. Syria urged the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in early 1958 under the leadership of Abd al-Nasir. In response, the conservative monarchies of Iraq and Jordan formed the Arab Federation, an alliance to counter the threat posed by the United Arab Republic. Though Saudi Arabia did not join this Hashimite Federation due to a historical mistrust for the Hashimites, the Kingdom did strongly support the Federation and its emphasis on the sovereignty of the Arab states.²⁵ In Saudi Arabia’s favor, the UAR broke apart in 1961, thereby alleviating some of the threat posed by Arab nationalism.

Multilateralism tends to be a patterned response by the Kingdom when faced with a threat. However, the multilateralism the Kingdom pursued during the period of Arab nationalism reflected a pattern of weakness and disagreement rather than strength and cooperation to counter threat. This pattern of weak multilateralism would continue through the following decades as the Kingdom reacted to new kinds of threat.

Moral and Islamic Persuasion

Saudi Arabia used its relationship with the United States and multilateralism to counter the threat of Egypt. However, the process of Arab nationalism was more of a threat than just the state which sponsored it. Saudi Arabia considered itself an Islamic state given legitimacy by its

²² *Organization of the Islamic Conferences* [Website] (cited February 22, 2005); available from <http://www.oic-oci.org/>.

²³ James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 229.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁵ James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 138.

fundamentalist nature. The Kingdom, therefore, contended with nationalist sentiment by promoting Islamic principles.

Due to the legitimacy given to Arab nationalism, the Kingdom had to pay lip-service, if nothing else, to the ideas spread by Arab nationalism including modernization, the pursuit of a unified Arab state, the rejection of the imperial powers, and the destruction of Israel. Bassam Tibi argues, "Since the 1950s, Pan-Arab nationalism has been a more or less obligatory domestic and foreign policy doctrine in most Arab countries, although...often expressed more in words than deeds."²⁶ The conservative regimes, including Saudi Arabia, "chose to ally themselves with Nasser's vision...rather than risk a decline in regional standing or a domestic backlash."²⁷ Despite its attempts to maintain a façade of support, the Kingdom continued to believe it had "a better future in a divided Arab world."²⁸

Arab nationalism had made in-roads not only within the greater Middle East but within Saudi Arabia as well. In the 1960s, some Saudi princes supported the ideology, a Saudi pilot defected to Egypt, and the Saudi government uncovered a pro-Abd al-Nasir plot within the armed forces.²⁹ To counter the initiatives of the Arab nationalists within both Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia began a campaign to promote Islamic principles through its education system and its foreign policy. In particular, Saudi Arabia invited many members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic organization denounced and persecuted by Abd al-Nasir, to teach youth in the Kingdom.³⁰ In addition, Saudi Arabia established a new Islamic university in Medina in 1961 designed to contribute to Islamic unity.³¹ Throughout that same year, Saudi Arabia invited Muslim leaders to visit the Kingdom, and the King traveled extensively to Muslim countries as a matter of policy.³² These strategies demonstrated a

²⁶ Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 211.

²⁷ Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," 420.

²⁸ Foreign Service Dispatch from the Embassy in Jiddah dated December 19, 1960 as cited in "Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Saudi Arabia, 1960-1963 Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 786a, 886a, and 986a and Foreign Affairs, Decimal Numbers 686a and 611.86a."

²⁹ Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003), 75.

³⁰ *Frontline: House of Saud*. As the Muslim Brotherhood became radicalized so too did the teaching of the youth in Saudi Arabia. See Chapter 4.

³¹ Unclassified Airgram from Embassy in Jiddah on June 1, 1961 as cited in "Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Saudi Arabia, 1960-1963 Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 786a, 886a, and 986a and Foreign Affairs, Decimal Numbers 686a and 611.86a."

³² Foreign Service Dispatch from the Embassy in Jiddah dated December 19, 1960 as cited in "Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Saudi Arabia, 1960-1963 Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 786a, 886a, and 986a and Foreign Affairs, Decimal Numbers 686a and 611.86a."

preference within the Kingdom to adhere to Islamic ideals above and beyond Arab nationalist ideals.

In addition, the Kingdom created the Muslim World League, a charitable organization committed to the spread of Wahhabism. The organization sent missionaries, money, and ideology throughout the Middle East to promote the Wahhabi way.³³ This League served the interests of the Saudi state during the Nasirist period. It has come under intense scrutiny since September 11, 2001 by the United States which froze its assets upon finding that it supported al-Qaida.

Responding to the actions of the Kingdom, Abd al-Nasir released a National Charter in 1962 which denounced the conservative regimes as illegitimate. Saudi Arabia released an Islamic Charter which effectively accused Abd al-Nasir of promoting atheism. Specifically, it criticized Abd al-Nasir's brand of nationalism as "fake nationalism based on atheistic doctrine."³⁴ Saudi Arabia's Islamic Charter called for all Arabs and Muslims to consider an alternative path closer to Islam, and the Kingdom put forth financial incentives for this to happen.³⁵ The Kingdom encouraged the loyalty to Islam to surpass devotion to an Arab identity.

This kind of promotion of Islam represented an attempt by the Kingdom to maintain the religious legitimacy upon which the state was built. If Saudi Arabia was able to promote itself as an Islamic state, then it could justify its rule over Mecca and Medina. When faced with a legitimacy threat, the Kingdom reacts by strongly propagating Islam and more specifically, denouncing the source of threat as antithetical to Islam.

Subversion

When faced with serious threats, states often employ clandestine methods to destroy the source of threat. In this case, the source of threat was an actor, specifically Abd al-Nasir. Eliminating the actor will not always achieve the goal of alleviating threat if the actor is symbolic of a larger process. However, as the "nationalist tide swept through every street, alley, and coffee shop in the Arab countries, and as [Abd al-]Nasir appeared to be the sole custodian of the Arab nationalist mantle..." conservative monarchies felt threatened by him.³⁶ Abd al-Nasir's

³³ Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom*, 76.

³⁴ Cited in Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 233.

³⁵ Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 233.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

visit to Saudi Arabia in 1956 represented an event that highlighted the threat posed by this actor. Abd al-Nasir was met with such popular support during his visit that he “came to be perceived as a threat to the stability of the Saudi monarchy.”³⁷

When Abd al-Nasir became the leader of the UAR, the Saudi monarchy funded Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, the intelligence chief in Syria, to install an anti-UAR regime in Damascus. After Abd al-Hamid Sarraj exposed the plot to Abd al-Nasir, accusations were made that King Saud arranged for Abd al-Nasir’s plane to be shot down. The Saudi royal family denies this, but they do not deny the funding of Abd al-Hamid Sarraj.³⁸ This Saudi plot does not represent a typical response by the monarchy to an individual threat. Scholars have generally concluded that King Saud was an incompetent leader who often made irresponsible decisions.³⁹ In fact, the Saudi royal family was so appalled by the revelation of this plot that they replaced King Saud with his brother, Faysal. Though the Kingdom thought installing a new King might alleviate the backlash created by the plot, it only strengthened the Arab movement. This kind of subversive response to threat, while important to point out in the historical record, does not reflect a pattern of response.

Conclusion

As the decade of Nasirism passed, conservative monarchies continually manipulated the vocabulary and ideas of Arab nationalism to benefit themselves.⁴⁰ Arab nationalism came to have myriad meanings to different people and states. This was part of the reason the ideology of nationalism fragmented. The sovereignty of the Arab states came to replace nationalism as the overriding force of Arab politics. In this sense, “Pan-Arabism stands out as a tragic and spectacular failure.”⁴¹ However, Barnett points out that “the demise of pan-Arabism...[does] not necessarily mark the end of Arab nationalism.”⁴² Instead, Arab nationalism as an ideology has become more centrist and therefore more compatible with notions of sovereignty. Despite

³⁷ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 116; Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 139.

³⁸ Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 139.

³⁹ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 107.

⁴⁰ Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," 498.

⁴¹ Major, "The Search for Arab Unity," 551.

⁴² Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," 503. Michael Barnett makes a case for why sovereignty has been institutionalized in the Arab world by studying three indicators of sovereignty and the decline of Pan-Arabism. See pages 506-508 in the cited article for this discussion.

sovereignty having succeeded as the mainstay of Arab politics, Arab states must continually work to legitimate their sovereignty since it is not “permanently anchored” in the Arab world.⁴³

The same is true for the religious legitimacy of Saudi Arabia. Despite its numerous responses to the threat of Arab nationalism, both politically and ideologically, Saudi Arabia more or less endured Arab nationalism rather than defeating it. The ideology was weakened over time due more to the rise of Israel, the power of the oil producing Gulf states, and the failure of the UAR rather than any particular set of responses by Saudi Arabia. In fact, the responses of the Saudi Kingdom were quite ineffectual in the long-term as evidenced by the endurance until today of the questions that arose concerning the legitimacy of the Kingdom.

⁴³ Ibid.: 509.

CHAPTER 3

STATE SECURITY THREAT: THE KUWAIT WAR

Following the example set in the previous chapter, this chapter seeks to isolate Saudi Arabia's response to a state security threat from that of a religious legitimacy threat. In addition, it shows that the pattern of response to a security threat differs from that of a legitimacy threat. The Kingdom relies on an informal, yet dominant oil-for-protection deal with the United States for its state security. The 1991 Kuwait War¹ represented the most serious security threat the third Saudi Arabian Kingdom had faced from an external actor. As with the Kingdom's response to legitimacy threats, a balancing of tensions has traditionally worked because it has only faced one kind of threat at a time. By examining the Kuwait War, I am able to analyze the tensions created when responding to a security threat.

The Principle of Non-Interference

In the early decades of the current Saudi Arabian state, the rise of a Pan-Arab identity was the gravest threat faced by the Kingdom. This threatened Saudi Arabia's sovereignty because the movement called for the unification of all Arab states. Michael Barnett argues that "a shared Arab identity has long been...at odds with a regional order premised on sovereignty and exclusivity."² Whether to establish the Arab Middle East regional order on Pan-Arab nationalism or on state sovereignty was disputed in the post-imperial period but has since "quieted and settled on sovereignty."³ The settling of this debate represents a turning point with regard to threat in Saudi Arabia. During the Arab nationalist era, legitimacy threats arose due to the contest between Arab and Islamic identity constructions. Security threats were less of a concern because the sense of a common Arab identity required a principle of noninterference; in other words, one Arab state would not interfere, and especially not invade, another. Over time, Arab nationalism became a weaker force partly because the state boundaries that had once seemed

¹ Within the discourse on Middle Eastern history and politics, there are three Gulf Wars: the Iraq-Iran conflict, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the current occupation of Iraq. However, in American political discourse, there are only two Gulf Wars (the Iraq-Iran conflict is not counted). To avoid this confusion, the 1990-1991 Gulf War conflict will be referred to as the Kuwait War in this thesis.

² Michael N. Barnett, "Regional Security after the Gulf War," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (Winter 1996-1997): 599.

³ *Ibid.*: 600. This topic is covered in depth in Chapter 2.

artificial began to take on a sense of historic permanence as younger generations arose who did not remember the pre-imperial period.

As states began to drop the ‘dressings’ of Pan-Arabism in favor of realist conceptions of sovereignty grounded in fixed borders, the security of each state became less assured.⁴ Despite the threat posed by Pan-Arabism, Saudi Arabia did benefit from the sense of stability and security that was an unintended consequence of Pan-Arab ideas. The Kuwait War represented a watershed in Arab politics because it officially shattered the principle of noninterference. Thus, the Kingdom had to face realist notions of security for the first time since conceptions of sovereignty now replaced the security provided by Pan-Arab notions. The Kingdom faced new kinds of risks based on security that had not been present during the Pan-Arab period.

Because it shattered notions of Arab unity, Saddam Husayn’s invasion of Kuwait shocked many states, especially Saudi Arabia. It was the first time an Arab state had invaded another Arab state, and in fact, it was the first time that a member of the United Nations had wholly annexed another member. Academic articles from the 1980s had argued that the border dispute between Kuwait and Iraq was minor, so no one expected Husayn to invade Kuwait.⁵ During a dinner on November 27, 1990, King Fahd remarked on the invasion, “Anyone would be surprised by such an event, especially us, since we are neighbors and were in agreement with one another.”⁶ Not only had Saudi Arabia supported Iraq financially during the Iraq-Iran conflict, but the Kingdom had signed a non-aggression pact with Iraq just a year before the invasion of Kuwait.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 represented not only a surprise, but also the “gravest threat” Saudi Arabia had ever faced relative to its border security.⁷ The ease with which the Iraq army was able to topple the Kuwaiti monarchy raised concerns within Saudi Arabia. Only a decade before, a revolution had unseated the Shah in Iran, and now, another monarchy had been easily toppled. The United States had been unable to prevent either of these events, so the Kingdom was dubious about its own security.

⁴ Michael Barnett states that “While realists have consistently maintained that the practice of Arab leaders demonstrated that they were more interested in their own interests than those of the Arab nation, . . . Arab leaders are now seemingly in open agreement with this view.” This is especially true in Saudi Arabia. Ibid.: 605.

⁵ Shaul Bakhash, “The Persian Gulf,” *World Politics* 37, no. 4 (July 1985): 606; Hermann F. Eilts, “Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf,” *International Security* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 100.

⁶ Nasser Ibrahim Rashid and Esber Ibrahim, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War* (Joplin: International Institute of Technology, Inc., 1992), 154. The entirety of King Fahd’s comments are found in this text.

⁷ Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*, 254.

The Invasion of Kuwait as a Security Threat

The massing of Iraqi troops on the Saudi border near the oil-rich Eastern Province constituted a direct threat to the Kingdom. Just ten miles from the Saudi border, Iraqi troops were being organized and supplied with weapons.⁸ Though the Kingdom's border with Iraq had no major cities or oil facilities, the border with Kuwait was much nearer to major roadways and oil facilities.⁹ Once Iraq effectively annexed Kuwait, Saudi Arabia was directly threatened by the invasion in two ways. First, Saudi Arabia needed to protect its borders. The borders of the Kingdom are ill-defined, and much of the desert includes neutral or buffer zones rather than distinct borders. For this reason, Charles Kennedy claims that some Iraqi soldiers crossed into Saudi territory on multiple occasions, but it was unclear at the time whether this was part of an invasion or due to the nebulous borders.¹⁰

Second, Saudi Arabia must protect its oil supply. Douglas Bohi and William Quandt argue that "the dangers and uncertainties accompanying any sizeable disruption of oil supplies are so great that it is worth major diplomatic efforts to forestall their occurrence."¹¹ In addition, according to one source, Iraq had contingency plans to "encircle the oil-rich...Eastern Province" of Saudi Arabia by first seizing the oil fields of the United Arab Emirates with paratroopers, then "leapfrogging the stretch of Saudi territory bordering the Gulf between Kuwait and the UAE...."¹² Since oil represents the lifeline of the Saudi Kingdom, the Iraqi invasion threatened its security more directly than any previous source of threat.

Saudi Arabia's Response to Threat

Kenneth Waltz argues that states have two primary choices when confronted with a security threat. First, they can mobilize their internal forces to confront the threat, and second,

⁸ Sulayman Nyang and Evan Hendricks, *A Line in the Sand: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Gulf War* (P.T. Books, 1995), 82.

⁹ Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 25.

¹⁰ Tom Huffman. *Understanding the Middle East: The Crisis in the Gulf*, produced by Ed Schwartz and Paul Antonie Distler, United States: Video Broadcast Services of Virginia Tech, 1990, VHS; Nyang and Hendricks, *A Line in the Sand: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Gulf War*, 86.

¹¹ Douglas R. Bohi and William B. Quandt, *Energy Security in the 1980s: Economic and Political Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1984), 40.

¹² Nyang and Hendricks, *A Line in the Sand: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Gulf War*, 75. This information came from an interview by the authors with a confidential source.

they can construct strategic alliances.¹³ Saudi Arabia did both before and especially during the Kuwait War. The Kingdom spent a large amount of money on weaponry, mostly from the United States and Europe. In addition, the Kingdom sought to construct alliances or agreements with the United Nations, the United States, and the Arab states through military coalitions and multilateral declarations. As a pattern of response, Saudi Arabia sought diplomatic solutions before advancing a military option; however, the Kingdom was prepared to appeal to the United States for the sake of its security when diplomacy failed.

The military capabilities of the Kingdom were inadequate to deal with the threat. The U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia at this time argued that “it has never been realistic to expect that the Saudi Arabian military would have a credible capacity on its own to defend the [Kingdom] against the vastly larger forces of its much more populous and militarized neighbors....”¹⁴ The Saudi government, realizing its inability to secure itself, requested the assistance of the United States. Fortunately for the Kingdom, the threat was grave enough to make an invitation to the United States understandable to most. The United States was the Kingdom’s strongest military ally. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and United States had developed in the 1940s, but it became much more of a security relationship in the 1970s. The British withdrew from the Gulf area in 1972 allowing the United States to assume responsibility for Gulf security. The United States attempted to play a minimal role by allowing Iran to be a regional power in the 1970s followed by Iraq in the 1980s.¹⁵ When Iraq used its power and military prowess against the Gulf rather than to protect it, the United States accepted the more dominant role, at the request of the Saudis, in ensuring the security of the Gulf. This time period solidified the oil-for-protection deal between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Multilateralism

As with any kind of threat, Saudi Arabia pursues multilateral strategies and diplomatic negotiation before it resorts to the use of force. The risk of unilateral action increases the likelihood of security threats, so the Kingdom encourages cooperative strategies through multilateral institutions and norms. Saudi Arabia attempts to play an influential part in Arab

¹³ Kenneth Waltz, *The Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979), 166-170.

¹⁴ McMillan, Cordesman, Fandy, and Mohamedi, "The United States and Saudi Arabia: American Interests and Challenges to the Kingdom in 2002."

¹⁵ Roland Dannreuther, "The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis," *Adelphi Papers*, no. 264 (Winter 1991/1992): 78; Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," 103-104.

councils due to its financial and moral reputation.¹⁶ Saudi Arabia, along with other Arab states, pursued diplomatic solutions throughout the Kuwait War and afterward. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia had “great faith in prospects for Arab diplomacy” partly because it had deterred an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1973.¹⁷ Arab states had often relied on personal diplomacy from one leader to another rather than the use of force. For this reason, both King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and King Husayn of Jordan attempted to contact Saddam Husayn when he first invaded Kuwait.¹⁸ Husayn surprisingly rebuked both leaders. The lack of communication and compromise between the Arab leaders is a primary reason some of the Arab states eventually resorted to force against another Arab state.

After the unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with Husayn by phone, the Kingdom supported Resolutions 660 and 661 passed by the United Nations Security Council on August 2 and August 6, 1990, respectively. Resolution 660 condemned Iraq, demanded its immediate withdrawal from Kuwait, and called for negotiations between the two states. Resolution 661 went further by imposing an economic blockade on Iraq by all United Nations members. Further resolutions were passed concerning sanctions and creating the no-fly zone. When other diplomatic pressures failed to resolve the conflict, Resolution 678, passed on November 29, authorized the use of “all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions.”¹⁹ Even when the Kingdom decided the use of force was necessary to protect itself, it ensured that it had the diplomatic support necessary to do so.

In addition to working with the United Nations, Saudi Arabia also sought the overt support of the Arab states, but this support was ultimately weak. In an emergency Arab Summit held in Cairo on August 10, eight days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, twelve of the twenty states present denounced the Iraqi actions. The drafted Resolution condemned the massing of Iraqi troops on the Saudi border, emphasized Arab solidarity with the Kingdom, and agreed to dispatch Arab forces to support Saudi Arabia.²⁰ A month later, the International Islamic

¹⁶ Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 22. This reputation has weakened with falling oil revenues and rising legitimacy questions.

¹⁷ Nyang and Hendricks, *A Line in the Sand: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Gulf War*, 76.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Security Council Resolutions* (United Nations, 1990 [cited April 30 2005]); available from <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1990/scres90.htm>. The additional resolutions included Resolution 662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 674, and 677.

²⁰ *Resolution Issued by the Emergency Arab Summit in Cairo on 10 August 1990* (The Middle East Institute of Japan, [cited April 29 2005]); available from <http://www.meij.or.jp/text/Gulf%20War/19900810.htm>.

Conference, held in Mecca, also denounced Iraq's actions. It drafted resolutions and recommendations for resolving the conflict including the unconditional withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.²¹ Working alongside the United Nations and the Arab states, Saudi Arabia attempted to apply diplomatic pressure on Iraq; however, due to weaknesses in Arab unity, the Kingdom's attempts to resolve the situation through diplomacy ultimately failed.

Despite its failure to convince Husayn to withdraw from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia continued its diplomatic efforts following the War. The Kingdom joined other states in the desire to assure the sovereignty of its borders from further threats. The Damascus Declaration, announced by the Gulf states (including Saudi Arabia), Egypt, and Syria in March 1991, called the Iraqi invasion "a flagrant violation of all established Arab, Islamic and international rules and customs;" in addition, it argued that Iraq had "disregarded a number of concepts and accomplishments of joint Arab action at a time when the Arab Community needed more than ever to unify and mobilize its potentials to stand up to many unprecedented dangers."²² This kind of language reinforces how shocked the Arab states were when Iraq neglected the principle of non-interference. To reaffirm commitment between the Arab states, the Declaration recognized the legitimacy of each state's borders, security arrangements, and natural resources, and it pledged military and strategic cooperation in the face of a threat.²³

The Kingdom continues to pursue multilateralism as a means of securing itself. However, according to Michael Barnett, it faces the problem that "Middle Eastern states speak the language of cooperative security but act according to the logic of competitive security."²⁴ In other words, despite the language of the Damascus Declaration and the formation of the GCC, the Arab League, and other multilateral institutions, Arab states tend to act unilaterally or request outside assistance in the face of a threat rather than cooperating. For example, when Iraq threatened Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom relied heavily on the United States and barely referred to the GCC. Barnett argues that competition overwhelms cooperation in the face of a threat because Arab states "scramble to increase their security in the most immediate way available."²⁵ However, I argue that this is due to the lack of a strong military force in the Middle East rather

²¹ For the full text of the Conference's resolutions and recommendations, see Rashid and Ibrahim, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War*, 241-243.

²² *The Amended Text of the Damascus Declaration* (The Middle East Institute of Japan, March 5-6, 1991 [cited April 29 2005]); available from <http://www.meij.or.jp/text/Gulf%20War/damascus.htm>.

²³ *Ibid.*; Barnett, "Regional Security after the Gulf War," 602.

²⁴ Barnett, "Regional Security after the Gulf War," 608.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

than a desire to scramble for security, as Barnett suggests. In fact, the Kingdom tried desperately to resolve the situation through Arab channels before requesting the assistance of the United States. If cooperation among Arab states had been diplomatically or militarily sufficient to resolve the Kuwait crisis, Saudi Arabia would not have invited the United States onto its soil due to the risk of causing serious internal dissent. Despite the decisions during the Kuwait War, Arab leaders continue to state that their long-term security interests are better met through cooperation and trust rather than unilateral action or external intervention. However, history has demonstrated the weakness of multilateral methods about Arab states in settling major disputes.

Military Response

Saudi Arabia's military was insufficiently prepared to handle the threat posed by the massing of Iraqi troops on the Saudi border. Saudi Arabia had an abundance of modern military equipment, but its armed forces were small and lacked appropriate training or personnel. For example, the number of aircraft exceeded the number of pilots available.²⁶ Throughout the 1980s, Saudi Arabia used almost one-fifth of its GDP to purchase military equipment; in addition, the Kingdom financed much of the military ambitions of the GCC.²⁷ In so doing, it developed an air combat capability surpassing that of Iraq.²⁸ However, the Kingdom had developed such a capability to repel an air attack from Israel; it was not prepared for a ground attack by Iraq. In fact, the overall effective military power of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria combined was not substantial enough to counter the military capabilities of Iraq.²⁹ Sultan Qabus bin Said of Oman, the only Gulf ruler with military experience at the time, said, "Let us be frank. We do not possess the military capability needed.... We do not have the army that can defend the security of the Gulf."³⁰ To its credit, Saudi Arabia spent much of its military budget on military bases. Therefore, it was able to accommodate a multinational military force twenty times the size of its own army during the Kuwait War.³¹

²⁶ Alain Gresh, "The Most Obscure Dictatorship," *Middle East Report*, no. 197 (Nov.-Dec. 1995): 5.

²⁷ Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 90; F. Gregory Gause, III, "Arms Supplies and Military Spending in the Gulf," *Middle East Report*, no. 204 (July-September 1997): 13; 'Abd al-Hadi Khalaf, "The Elusive Quest for Gulf Security," *Middle East Report*, no. 148 (Sept - Oct 1987): 20.

²⁸ Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 27.

²⁹ Huffman, *Understanding the Middle East: The Crisis in the Gulf*.

³⁰ Khalaf, "The Elusive Quest for Gulf Security," 22.

³¹ "World Asunder - War with Iraq May Bring 'Western' Change to the Desert Kingdom," *The Economist*, January 26, 1991.

Arguably, the Kingdom had the financial power to invest in a larger army with proper training, but it had a reason for not doing so. As Hermann Eilts states, “The Saudi leadership is well aware of the spate of military coups which has marked the history of the area.”³² Due to the fear of a coup, the royal family did not feel secure enough to build such a force. As in any authoritarian regime, the possibility of resistance and coups is always a concern, and the Kingdom made a concerted effort to ensure the loyalty of its military through financial incentives and the supply of modern equipment.³³

The small army of the Saudi state should not come as a surprise. Saudi Arabia is a state not unlike the phrase “no taxation, no representation.” The population agrees to abide by the rule of the royal family; in return, the population is neither directly taxed nor conscripted into military service.³⁴ Therefore, the military remains a small, all-volunteer, and relatively powerless aspect of the Saudi state. When the Iraqi threat arose in 1990, Saudi Arabia did mobilize its forces, but more importantly, it called on the United States to rush “critical firepower to the Saudi monarchy.”³⁵

Invitation to the United States

The use of the United States military forces to confront a threat to Saudi security was controversial. The relationship between the two states was well-known, yet the Kingdom had been able to downplay it. Inviting half-a-million American soldiers onto its soil now made that impossible. In making the decision to invite the American military to Saudi Arabian bases, the Kingdom attempted to balance its need for security with the resulting controversy. As one American official commented, somewhat dryly, “The Saudis are being the Saudis. They want us there to save them one second before the Iraqis invade and not a moment sooner.”³⁶

Knowing that an invitation to American soldiers would rouse critics among its population, the royal family asked the preeminent Saudi religious figure, Shaykh Abd al-Aziz

³² Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," 99.

³³ "World Asunder - War with Iraq May Bring 'Western' Change to the Desert Kingdom.," Saleh Al-Mani, "Security and Threat Perceptions in Saudi Arabia," in *National Threat Perceptions in the Middle East* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, September 1995), 85; Dannreuther, "The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis," 81; Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," 99.

³⁴ Gresh, "The Most Obscure Dictatorship," 5; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, 202.

³⁵ Rowan Scarborough, "A World Crisis in the Persian Gulf: Saudis Getting Advanced Arms," *The Washington Times*, August 8, 1990.

³⁶ Nyang and Hendricks, *A Line in the Sand: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Gulf War*, 80-81.

ibn Baz, to study the issue. He released a *fatwa* in January 1991 stating, “The principles of Islamic [*sharia*] make it a duty of the [Muslim] ruler to seek the help of whoever has the power which enables them to [deter anyone wishing to invade this land].”³⁷ This effectively authorized the use of non-Muslim forces on Saudi soil. In addition, Saudi Arabia found support among some of the Arab states. At a conference in 1954, the Arab states had established that it was acceptable to use Western assistance if there was no Arab solution and Arab states were in consensus.³⁸ Similarly, the International Islamic Conference supported the Saudi use of foreign troops in the Kuwait War referring to it as “self-defense.”³⁹

While the Kingdom had diplomatic support, there were critics among its own people concerning the use of foreign troops. As Larbi Sadiki suggests, “...no issue is more sensitive to Saudis, including members of the Royal House, than the presence of foreign troops in their country.”⁴⁰ However, the dissenting voices were weak at first and challenged the particular policy rather than the legitimacy of the state as a whole.⁴¹ Madawi al-Rasheed, a Saudi historian, argues, “While the majority [of Saudis] accepted American military support as a necessary strategy, a substantial minority regarded it as a violation of Islamic principles.”⁴² This criticism, coming mostly from young Islamic scholars, initially focused on the stationing of foreign troops but it soon extended to other realms of government policy, especially the issue of political rights. In the post-War period, the government entered what al-Rasheed refers to as an ‘age of petitions.’⁴³ Despite facing the tension of balancing both a security threat and a legitimacy crisis, the Kingdom effectively dealt with the security threat first and the legitimacy crisis afterward. The Kingdom was lucky, in effect, because the victory over Iraq was quick and decisive. This meant that the large number of foreign troops were on its soil for a relatively short period of time. The criticisms that arose did not begin to reach peak levels until after the conclusion of the War. The Kingdom, therefore, was able to deal with only one kind of threat at a time.

³⁷ *Statement Issued By The Council of Senior Ulama Of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, August 13, 1990* reproduced and translated in Rashid and Ibrahim, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War*, 185.

³⁸ Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," 417.

³⁹ *Resolutions & Recommendations Of The International Islamic Conference On The Situation In The Gulf, September 10-12, 1990* reproduced and translated in Rashid and Ibrahim, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War*, 242.

⁴⁰ Larbi Sadiki, "Saudi Arabia: Re-Reading Politics and Religion in the Wake of September 11," in *Islam and Political Legitimacy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 41.

⁴¹ Dannreuther, "The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis," 26.

⁴² Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 164.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 168.

Conclusion

While the immediate threat of Saddam Husayn was abated through the use of the coalition forces, he remained in power after 1991, and therefore, he remained a regional threat. Due to such circumstances, Saudi Arabia has continued to promote multilateralism and diplomacy. The balance of power shifted inevitably to the “winners” of the War – the Gulf states, Egypt, and Syria at the expense of Iraq, Yemen, and Jordan.⁴⁴ As with the threat of Arab nationalism, Saudi Arabia was able to endure the threat. J.E. Peterson states, “the real strength of Saudi foreign policy has been in the traits of continuity, patience, and persistence.”⁴⁵ However, until the present time, Saudi Arabia has only dealt with one kind of threat at a time. It has, therefore, managed to balance the resulting tensions against one another. In the face of both threats simultaneously, the pattern of response will have to shift drastically if the Kingdom wishes to exist in its present form.

⁴⁴ Dannreuther, "The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis," 81.

⁴⁵ Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security*, 30.

CHAPTER 4

THE THREAT FROM THE ISLAMISTS

The primary analytical premise of this thesis rests on the acknowledgement that Islamism is a qualitatively unique threat for Saudi Arabia. Historically, the Kingdom has dealt with isolated religious legitimacy or state security threats; however, Islamism represents both simultaneously. Since the patterns of response to a legitimacy threat are incompatible with those to a state security threat, the Kingdom faces its gravest crisis yet. The tactics of response used historically will no longer operate effectively against Islamism. The Kingdom faces a predicament that requires it to employ new response methods. Unfortunately, the royal family is slow to change which potentially undermines the entire political system.

In selecting a language to use to refer to those groups and individuals that currently threaten Saudi Arabia's legitimacy and security, I had four primary options used in the literature: Islamic fundamentalists, Islamic terrorists, jihadists, and Islamists. Unfortunately, each term carries a potential bias with it. First, the members of the royal family are Islamic fundamentalists characterized by their belief in Islam as a religion *and* as a political way of life. Since this term does not distinguish between the royal family, the Islamic mainstream, and those who actually threaten the Kingdom, the use of 'Islamic fundamentalist' is misleading.¹ Second, the term 'Islamic terrorist' carries a particular slant that does not adequately describe many of the individuals who threaten the Kingdom's legitimacy. For example, many members of the *ulama* have called for political reform. This threatens the legitimacy of the Kingdom, but they are not terrorists. Third, the term 'jihadist' accepts the corruption of the term *jihad*, and it falls into the same trap as 'terrorist' where those who wish to reform Saudi Arabia's political system are grouped with those who use violent means to pursue their agenda.

This chapter refers to those individuals and groups who directly threaten Saudi Arabia as Islamists. This term is hardly ideal because it seems to tie the concept of threat (and violence) to Islam. This is an inaccurate correlation because the definition of threat in this thesis does not inevitably signify violence. Many of those who threaten the Kingdom are not malevolent. Those who constitute a threat to the Kingdom are often political or moral threats. To use the term

¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 131.

‘Islamist’ is precisely to avoid such terms (such as ‘jihadist’ or ‘terrorist’) that associate Islam with malice of any kind.

Despite its imperfections, the term Islamist is effective because it implies a sense of activism, and it allows for a further differentiation between the reformists and the radicals. Reformists are those who wish to change the political system within Saudi Arabia but do not advocate toppling the royal family. They use political, peaceful means where possible to encourage change. Alternatively, radicals are those who advocate the abdication of the Saudi royal family and often use violence to achieve their objectives. The International Crisis Group (ICG) refers to the “two faces of Islamism in contemporary Saudi Arabia [as] a militant, violent one bent on destabilising the Kingdom..., and a moderate, progressive one, intent on promoting political, social and religious reform.”² These two groups share some grievances, but their activism takes on a different form. Together they present a serious legitimacy and security threat to the Kingdom.

This threat forces Saudi Arabia to deal with both aspects of Islamism: its appeal and its manifestation. Islamists are attracted to their ideology because they question the legitimacy of the Saudi Kingdom due to what they see as the corruption of the royal family, the failed policies of modernization, high unemployment rates, and a lack of political freedom, among other grievances. In addition, Saudi Arabia must deal with how the Islamist ideology can exhibit itself in violent action. The security of the Kingdom is compromised by the military-like capabilities of the radical Islamist networks. Islamists threaten the Kingdom’s legitimacy through their ideology and its security through their capabilities. Saudi Arabia, therefore, confronts both aspects of the Islamist threat simultaneously.

The irony here is that the religious ideology that the Kingdom promotes is precisely the one being used to oppose the rule of the royal family. There arises a question of culpability in this. A Washington Post article asks “whether the religious traditions of the [Kingdom] have promoted Islamic terrorism.” Joseph McMillan of the Institute for National Strategic Studies refers to the “unwitting role that Saudi Arabia and the Saudi national ideology have had in shaping the terrorist phenomenon.”³ Is Saudi Arabia to blame for the threat it now faces? The

² "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?" *Middle East Report*, No. 31 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 21, 2004), i.

³ McMillan, Cordesman, Fandy, and Mohamedi, "The United States and Saudi Arabia: American Interests and Challenges to the Kingdom in 2002."

promotion of Wahhabism for decades through the educational system, the political system, and the media has certainly had an effect on the mindset of the Kingdom's population.

Though Saudi Arabia has long promoted a strict version of Islam, its propagation of such an ideology became more intense when it tried to counter the threat of Arab nationalism.⁴ The Egyptian regime was a threat to Saudi Arabia, and since the Muslim Brotherhood shared some ideologies with Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia was a “natural asylum” for radical Egyptian Islamists.⁵ The educational system in Saudi Arabia has been permeated with the ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood since this era when Saudi Arabia served as a refuge for political (and often radical) opponents of the Abd al-Nasir regime. Soon, the universities and public schools served as the soapbox for this group of Islamists. Dore Gold argues that the combination of the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism in the 1970s was a “potent mixture” for radicalism to develop.⁶ Indeed, the radicalism that now confronts the Kingdom was fostered during the Abd al-Nasir era, and Islamism today can be considered, at least in part, an outgrowth of the anti-nationalist movement of the 1960s. Mahmud Faksh says, “In a way, today's [Islamism] is a continuation of the...nationalist struggle, but now couched in the language of radical Islam and in a new form.”⁷ Olivier Roy calls it a “reincarnation of the nationalist movement...with an Islamic face.”⁸ The royal family of Saudi Arabia has periodically had to regenerate its legitimacy on a continuing basis because it is consistently challenged. The irony, of course, is that the group that Saudi Arabia sheltered in the 1950s and 1960s fostered the ideas that now challenge it, and, according to Anthony Cordesman, “The challenges the Kingdom faces are more serious than any it has seen since the days of [Abd al-]Nasir....”⁹

Though the foundation for the current Islamism began in the Abd al-Nasir era, it was not radicalized until the following decades. The 1980s brought the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and in the 1990s, many of the *mujahideen* returned to the Middle East with a newfound purpose to continue the fight for Islam. In addition, the Kuwait War broke out in 1991 which gave the radicals the ‘fuel’ necessary to inflame the tensions already present in Saudi society. It was during the war with the Soviets and afterward that many radicals began calling for a *jihad*. Saudi

⁴ See Chapter 2 for an analysis of this particular threat.

⁵ Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom*, 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷ Mahmud A. Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 26.

⁸ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 130.

⁹ Cordesman, *The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, 3.

Arabia had, in fact, supported the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan. It was the Kingdom's foreign policy to support any conservative Islamic movement or regime (including, later, the Taliban). *The Economist* argues that this is a policy that "has now come home to roost," because the movements once supported financially and politically by the Kingdom presently threaten it.¹⁰ However, the degree to which Saudi Arabian policy has been *directly* responsible for the threat it faces is harder to measure because most Saudis who have been exposed to the promotion of Wahhabism for the last several decades are not radicals nor even reformists. Despite this, Saudi Arabia must be prepared to accept responsibility for legitimizing extremist ideologies, even if the royal family has not supported the violence that comes with it. F. Gregory Gause, III, the foremost American academic expert on Saudi foreign policy, argues that "official Wahhabism may not encourage antistate violence, but it is a particularly severe and intolerant interpretation of Islam.... The Saudi elites should consider just what role such a severe doctrine and the vast religious infrastructure they have built around it played" in the rise of Islamism.¹¹ Along with discovering the root ideological causes of terrorism directed at its Kingdom, the Saudi royal family must also deal with the manifestations of such thought as evidenced by a simultaneous legitimacy and security threat.

Legitimacy Crisis: The Appeal of Islamism

The legitimacy of the Saudi Kingdom is derived from the relationship between the royal family that rules and the Kingdom's clerical establishment that provides religious authority for the rule. The clerical establishment promotes Wahhabism, yet the royal family often acts in ways counter to that set of beliefs. As'ad Abukhalil, a Saudi critic, calls this the 'Saudi paradox.' He asks, "How can the state continue to maintain its legitimacy when the governing family embodies a flagrant and perpetual violation of the core rules and beliefs propagated by official state schools and mosques and enforced by religious police?"¹² It is precisely this question that Usama bin Ladin attempts to raise in the minds of Saudis. Ironically, bin Ladin uses the same set of religious principles grounded in Wahhabism to oppose the legitimacy of the Kingdom. As Larbi Sadiki argues, "...if the state can use religion for legitimizing purposes, there is nothing

¹⁰ "The Double-Act Wears Thin," *The Economist*, September 27, 2001.

¹¹ F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Kingdom in the Middle: Saudi Arabia's Double Game," in *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*, ed. James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose (Oxford: Public Affairs, 2001), 122.

¹² As'ad Abukhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), 36.

stopping society from using it to contest the rulers' legitimacy...."¹³ Indeed, political Islam is a particularly potent vehicle for the expression of political, economic, and social discontent because the use of Islam as a critique "confers on it an authority to evaluate government policies" that exists only in a Islam-centered state.¹⁴ In a secular state, the use of Islam to critique state policy would be invalid, but in a religious monarchy such as Saudi Arabia, the use of Islamic principles is the *only* legitimate means of critique. This section will explore the legitimacy threat facing Saudi Arabia by discussing the appeal of reformist and radical Islamism, the particular set of arguments put forth by the Islamists, and the rise of this legitimacy threat through the Kuwait War.

Which set of issues or life experiences attracts each Islamist to radical ideology is impossible to determine; however, there are several essentials that tend to facilitate easier recruitment. In particular, Islamist movements call for an alignment of political life where Islam is central to law, policy, and justice. Of course, the Saudi Arabian form of governance is already designed in this way, but most Saudis observe corruption and greed rather than religious piety emanating from the royal house. Therefore, the Islamist movement often seems more 'religious' than the House of Saud. In a sense, the Islamist movement and the royal family are in a "battle for the [Saudi] people's hearts and minds."¹⁵ A legitimacy threat for the Kingdom arises because the Islamists are, in a sense, winning the battle in many ways. Not only does the royal family give its subjects reasons to question its devotion to Islam, but the Islamist movement clearly represents an alternative. Mahmud A. Faksh states this plainly,

"The hold of Islam on the masses gives the Islamic movement a natural advantage.... It enables the movement to capture the people's imagination, to inspire them, and to mobilize them for political action. To that end, the mosque and its affiliate bodies...and the independent networks of Islamic education, social welfare, and medical services... [act as] an alternative to inadequate or inefficient government services to enhance [the Islamists'] position with the masses."¹⁶

Religious movements in Saudi Arabia have another advantage. They are the only kind of opposition movement because rulers forbid meetings, public demonstrations, political parties, and other forms of association in autocratic regimes like the House of Saud. However, in a

¹³ Sadiki, "Saudi Arabia: Re-Reading Politics and Religion in the Wake of September 11," 33.

¹⁴ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "State Legitimacy," in *Islam and Political Legitimacy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 173.

¹⁵ Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, 25.

¹⁶ Ibid.

regime like the Saudi Kingdom, public worship is allowed, and therefore represents the only means of gathering regularly to foster an opposition. Bernard Lewis suggests, “The more oppressive a regime, the more it helps the [Islamists] by giving them a virtual monopoly of opposition.”¹⁷ This, in turn, makes these groups a powerful force against the royal family.

To confront the challenge of an Islamist movement that presents itself as pious and charitable, the Saudi royal family must contend with its own credibility issues. The ICG lists three main legitimacy issues for the Kingdom, specifically “the closed and arbitrary nature of the political system, the concentrated power and wealth of the royal family, and the record of financial corruption and profligacy of many of its members.”¹⁸ These have been issues for the royal family since the profits from oil skyrocketed in the 1950s, yet they are of particular relevance to Saudi Arabia now for a number of reasons. First, while the closed political system was long unsatisfactory to many Saudis, it was the more recent political decisions, such as the invitation to American soldiers during the Kuwait War, that fueled the political dissent. In addition, Saudis are more educated than at any time previous and more politically efficacious.¹⁹ Second, the resentment toward the concentration of wealth has become particularly acute because Saudi oil wealth has fallen by at least 20% and population has more than doubled since 1980.²⁰ High unemployment rates and lower per capita income among educated, frustrated young males creates room for a legitimacy crisis. Coupled with the perception of greed and corruption within the royal family, Faksh argues that the “swelling ranks of disaffected and disadvantaged Saudis have provided recruits” for Islamic groups, both reformists and radicals.²¹

These two general groups of Islamists in Saudi Arabia, the reformists and the radicals, gained influence during approximately the same time. Challenges to regime legitimacy had perpetually existed; however, the invitation of American soldiers during the Kuwait War inflamed these challenges and converted a number of them into direct opposition to the rule of the royal family. According to Sadiki, political opposition of this nature had never been a part of Saudi society until the Kuwait War.²² The Kuwait War was a watershed for Saudi Arabia since it

¹⁷ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, 133.

¹⁸ "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?," i.

¹⁹ "Adapt or Die," *The Economist*, March 4, 2004.

²⁰ Cordesman, *The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, 20. This writer is aware of the particularly high oil prices since 2000 or so, but this has not significantly affected the unemployment rates and per capita income.

²¹ Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, 32.

²² Sadiki, "Saudi Arabia: Re-Reading Politics and Religion in the Wake of September 11," 34.

proved to Saudis that the royal family could not defend its subjects without outside reliance.²³ This fact alone gave legitimacy to the critics of the War – both reformists and radicals – by agitating many Saudis. In the aftermath of the War, many reformists and radicals began campaigns against the Saudi royal family. The reformists used petitions and other political means while the radicals used mosque pulpits and violence to de-legitimate the government.

The reformists began their political campaign through what Madawi al-Rasheed calls an ‘age of petitions.’²⁴ It began in early 1991 with a series of letters to the King demanding various reforms to the political system in order to make it more open and representative. This culminated in a 1992 *Memorandum of Advice* signed by over one hundred prominent religious figures. This document demanded greater freedom of speech, a greater respect for human rights according to the *sharia*, and an abolition of torture, among other topics. To the embarrassment of the government, it was published outside of Saudi Arabia thereby assuming greater relevance. This prompted many Saudis to engage in the kind of political discussion generally left to the *ulama* or royal family.²⁵ These kinds of petitions were presented continually throughout the 1990s. In addition, reformists became particularly adept at using modern media such as faxes, emails, and websites to spread their message.²⁶ In fact, a reformist group was able to organize a protest by hundreds of Saudis in October 2003.²⁷ Such political dissent is rarely demonstrated since most Saudis are more fearful than politically active. This protest may have signaled a change in this. The reformist message is increasingly gaining support from everyday Saudis, but more importantly, these petitions for reform have come almost entirely from religious figures. The reformists have managed to create a political legitimacy threat within the clerical establishment.

On the other hand, the radical Islamists incited a legitimacy threat from everyday Saudis, some of whom support their violent means, but most of whom merely sympathize with their ideas. Radicals differ from reformists in that they do not believe reforming the government is

²³ This is discussed in depth in Chapter 3. Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, 24.

²⁴ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 168.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 169-171.

²⁶ Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, 95.

²⁷ F. Gregory Gause, III, "Saudi Islamists: Challenge or Support for Saudi Stability and Security?" (Presented at Succession, Security and Stability in Saudi Arabia, Hosted by National Defense University, Washington, D.C., April 14 2004), 3; J.E. Peterson, "Saudi Arabia: Internal Security Incidents since 1979," *Arabian Peninsula Background Note*, no. APBN-003 (February 2005): 14-15. Due to time zone confusion, these two sources give a different date for this event. It occurred either on October 13 or October 14.

enough. In his critique of the Saudi government in the mid-1990s, bin Ladin argued that the Saudi regime was un-Islamic and called for the King's resignation. His 1996 *Declaration of War* was clearly intended for the Saudi public; however, it should be noted that he did not call for an overthrow of the government. He urged Saudi subjects to eschew a civil war in Saudi Arabia since confronting one's rulers in a violent way is against the tenets of Wahhabism.²⁸ There exists a tension in this because radical Islamists want to remove the Saudi government, yet doing so counters their conception of Islam. They seek to resolve this predicament by actively stirring up a legitimacy crisis to such an extent that it forces the Saudi government to resign.

More importantly for their purposes, they pursue violent tactics to undermine the security of the regime. The legitimacy threat for the regime comes not from the relatively few active radicals, but rather, from their supporters and sympathizers. One confidential poll, conducted by a Saudi intelligence agency, in October 2001 showed that 95% of Saudi men between the ages of 25-41 approved of bin Ladin's cause.²⁹ Of course, the accuracy of this poll comes into serious question considering the fear of dissent in Saudi Arabia and the timing of the poll, yet even if it is exaggerated, it still indicates a significant sympathy with the Islamist cause. Michael Scheuer, a 22-year Central Intelligence Agency veteran who ran the Counterterrorist Center's bin Ladin desk, argues, "There is no doubt that bin [Ladin] is immensely popular in the kingdom."³⁰ He goes on to quote Qinan al-Ghamdi, a former editor-in-chief and supporter of the royal family, who said, "...extremist ideas, like those of bin [Ladin] have roots here. When bin [Ladin] calls for *jihad* or recruits, his ideas find many takers here...."³¹ Other polls support the idea that many sympathizers exist in Saudi Arabia though they tend to also show that Saudis overwhelmingly condemn violence as a means of change (especially within Saudi Arabia).³² The sympathy with the cause, however, may translate into financial or logistical support from everyday subjects which serves as a direct threat to the legitimacy of the Kingdom.

Security Crisis: The Target of Islamic Fundamentalism

If the purpose of the radical Islamists is to weaken the ruling government until it resigns or can no longer rule, then they must attack not only the legitimacy of the regime but also its

²⁸ Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom*, 171, 180.

²⁹ Christopher Dickey and Rob Nordland, "The Fire That Won't Die Out," *Newsweek*, July 22, 2002.

³⁰ Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*, 71.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³² Gause, "Saudi Islamists: Challenge or Support for Saudi Stability and Security?," 2-3.

security. This two-pronged method of attack began in the wake of the Kuwait War, peaked in the mid-1990s, and continues today. This section will explore the manifestation of radical Islamism, the ideology and organization of al-Qaida, and the rise of this security threat in the 1990s.

On November 13, 1995, a car bomb exploded at prayer time at a Saudi National Guard facility in Riyadh. Five Americans and two Indians were killed with sixty additional casualties. Various Islamist groups claimed responsibility referencing the influence of bin Ladin.³³ Though small violent incidents had occurred before, this bombing was the first serious attempt by radical Islamists to disrupt the internal security of Saudi Arabia. Seven months later, in June 1996, a truck bomb exploded at a U.S. military housing complex killing nineteen Americans and injuring 386 others, including 147 Saudis.³⁴ Since these attacks were targeted at American military personnel, it was a warning to the royal family regarding its relationship with the United States particularly with respect to the continued presence of American troops in the Kingdom. An ICG report argues, "There is little doubt...that both events were landmarks in the radicalization of Islamist dissent that began with the 1991 [Kuwait] War."³⁵

Although the attacks diminished in the latter part of that decade in favor of attacks outside of the Kingdom, a new wave of attacks within Saudi Arabia erupted on May 12, 2003. Al-Qaida cells attacked training and residential complexes in Riyadh occupied by Westerners and Arabs. Thirty-four people were killed with almost two hundred injured.³⁶ Another major attack occurred in November of that year when al-Qaida militants disguised as police forced their way into a residential compound to set off a car bomb. Approximately eighteen people were killed with 122 wounded.³⁷ These acts of violence were the most serious attacks the Kingdom had yet faced. The use of such violence confirmed the split between the reformists (who condemned the attacks) and the radicals. Since these attacks, al-Qaida has steadily and continually bombed 'soft targets' within the Kingdom.

Some scholars argue that the method of attacking soft targets serves to demonstrate the diminishing capacity of al-Qaida.³⁸ On the contrary, although it is impossible to know the capacities of a network such as al-Qaida, the number and consistency of the 2003 attacks

³³ Peterson, "Saudi Arabia: Internal Security Incidents since 1979," 4.

³⁴ Ibid.: 6.

³⁵ "Saudi Arabia Background: Who Are the Islamists?," 6.

³⁶ Peterson, "Saudi Arabia: Internal Security Incidents since 1979," 10-11.

³⁷ Ibid.: 15.

³⁸ "Saudi Arabia Background: Who Are the Islamists?"; Mahan Abedin, "An Interview with Jamal Khashoggi," *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no. 14 (2004).

demonstrate the strength of this organization in the post-September 11th environment. Al-Qaida has to continually hit soft targets in order to maintain its reputation. Hoffman argues, “New attacks are...needed to maintain [al-Qaida’s] relevance as a force in international politics...”³⁹ Hitting soft targets does not represent weakness, but rather, reveals an ability on the part of the organization to persist with a series of attacks despite the augmented security measures within the Kingdom. This demonstrates a sense of vigor and ability on the part of the radical Islamists, particularly al-Qaida, which threatens the stability and security of the Kingdom. In addition, the threat of a larger attack always looms – a fear that is continually reinforced by the smaller attacks.

Bruce Hoffman of the RAND Corporation argued in an article on al-Qaida that the nature of the organization has changed since September 11th to accommodate the aggressive ‘war on terror.’ He states that the new al-Qaida is “an amorphous movement tenuously held together by a loosely networked transnational constituency rather than a monolithic, international terrorist organization with either a defined or identifiable command and control apparatus.”⁴⁰ Indeed, al-Qaida tends to have a loose structure, even within Saudi Arabia, but the small cells are connected by a unified purpose. Al-Qaida has, in effect, become “something more akin to an ideology” than a bureaucratic entity.⁴¹ In this form, it actually achieves a greater strategic effectiveness as a terrorist organization since it can now exploit local causes as microcosms of its more transnational cause.

Much of the strength of the organization over the last five years has come from its valuable “professional media bureau [which] appears to be one of its most important and best protected units.”⁴² Al-Qaida claims it is more formidable now than before September 11th. The “propaganda does not have to be true to be believed: all that matters is that it is communicated effectively and persuasively – precisely the two essential components of information operations that [al-Qaida] has arguably mastered.”⁴³ *The Washington Post* recently published a report on the use of the internet by terrorist organizations. The report emphasizes the pervasiveness of the internet as a tool for these networks due to its flexibility, anonymity, and availability. Through

³⁹ Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," 551.

⁴⁰ Bruce Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (2004): 552.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Saudi Arabia Background: Who Are the Islamists?," 15.

⁴³ Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," 552.

the use of the internet, Islamists can reach each other, possible recruits, and the general public – all under the nose of governments, yet out of their reach.⁴⁴

The role of the media has become central for the Islamists to ensure support for all their layers within the Kingdom. Al-Qaida has three layers within the country: the terrorists, the logistical network facilitating terrorism, and the significant number of Saudis who are sympathetic to the cause.⁴⁵ Each of these are enabled by effective media and propaganda campaigns that ensure al-Qaida does not become a mere fringe group in the Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia's Response to Threat

The 'war on terror' presents Saudi Arabia with a particularly problematic situation. The Kingdom must coordinate with the leader of the 'war on terror,' the United States, in order to fight the Islamist threat; yet, in coordinating with the United States to ensure its security, the Kingdom inflames the attacks on its legitimacy. In addition, if the Kingdom attempts to open its political society in a way that would help alleviate the legitimacy threat, it makes itself more vulnerable to security threats.⁴⁶ The paradox in Saudi Arabia is that attempt to ensure its legitimacy often impedes its security and vice versa. Another example, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, concerns the Kingdom's unwillingness to build a strong enough army to defend itself because it does not have legitimacy enough to trust a large army. The threat of the Islamists, both reformist and radical, is that they reinforce the legitimacy threat while simultaneously creating a security threat. Due to the inherent contradictions in this, Saudi Arabia's ability to respond to threat is severely restricted and compromised.⁴⁷

Response to Legitimacy Threat

Saudi Arabia's response to the legitimacy threat it now confronts has been mixed partially due to the leadership of the country and partially due to the strange paradox in which it

⁴⁴ Steve Coll and Susan B. Glasser, "Terrorists Turn to the Web as a Base of Operations," *The Washington Post*, August 7, 2005, A01.

⁴⁵ Abedin, "An Interview with Jamal Khashoggi," 5. The interviewer, not Jamal Khashoggi, made the comment about the three layers.

⁴⁶ An additional irony of less importance to this particular thesis is explained by F.Gregory Gause, III, in his essay, "Saudi Islamists: Challenge or Support for Saudi Stability and Security." He argues that those who support the relationship with the United States tend to be the loyalists of the Kingdom and its political system while those who call for the kinds of reforms the United States would like (open political system, human rights, etc.) are often the Islamists who rally against the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

⁴⁷ See Appendix B for a chart which outlines these contradictions and paradoxes.

finds itself. First, the royal family has continued to exert its influence over the clerical establishment to fight the legitimacy bestowed upon the Islamist ideologies, yet even some of the clerics have begun to question the Kingdom. Second, Saudi Arabia has attempted to distance itself from the United States in whatever ways possible, but it finds this difficult when trying to fight the 'war on terror.' Third, Saudi Arabia has begun working with the international community in multilateral ways. Finally, the Kingdom has resorted to repressive techniques to control the burgeoning reformist movement that began to grow after the Kuwait War, but in so doing, it reinforces the ideas expressed by these reformists and assists in radicalizing some of them. This section will explore this four-fold set of responses all of which create tensions within Saudi policy-making.

Saudi Arabia has historically attained its legitimacy through the promotion of Wahhabism, and more importantly, the support thereof by the religious establishment. The *ulama* continue to support the Kingdom through *fatwas*, endorsements of foreign and domestic policy, and perhaps most importantly, through condemnations of the radical Islamic agenda. For example, the grand *mufti* of Saudi Arabia stated in January 2005 that, "The greatest affliction to strike the nation of Islam came from some of its own sons, who were lured by the devil. They have called the nation infidel, they have shed protected blood and they have spread vice on Earth, with explosions and destruction and killing of innocents."⁴⁸ These kind of statements are an effort by the Kingdom, under the auspices of the clerics, to delegitimize the ideology of the radicals. In addition to mobilizing the *ulama* for this cause, the royal family has highlighted the suffering of victims and televised militants recanting their beliefs.⁴⁹ Indeed, evidence tends to show that Saudis do condemn the violence of the radicals, but they support the rhetoric of these groups even when highly critical of the royal family. In addition, the clerical establishment within the Kingdom is increasingly perceived as a tool of the royal family rather than a legitimate religious source. Therefore, the Kingdom's tactics may work to delegitimize the radical Islamist cause in some ways, but its effectiveness is severely limited in others.

In order to protect its legitimacy, Saudi Arabia has tried to downplay its relationship with the United States. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States requested that Saudi Arabia provide information of all kinds in an effort to end terrorism. Due to its nature

⁴⁸ "Saudi Cleric Faults Islamic Militants," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2005, A21.

⁴⁹ "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?," 19.

as a closed society and allegedly due to its prior financial support (willful or not) of terrorist organizations, the Kingdom initially refused. Within the context of its political system, it should not be surprising that the royal family did not allow a full and transparent investigation into its possible support for radical Islamist organizations. Inevitably, the Saudi royal family saw this as an internal matter.

As the Islamist threat and the accusations against the Saudi family began to grow, it pushed for a closer relationship with the United States and the international community through multilateralism. The Kingdom even requested that the information about it contained in the 9/11 Commission Report be released.⁵⁰ In addition, the Kingdom has hosted a number of anti-terrorism conferences. The most recent conference, called the "Counter-Terrorism International Conference," was held in Riyadh from February 5-8, 2005. At the end of the Conference, the *Riyadh Declaration* was written and signed by those in attendance. It stressed the importance of cooperation and working with the United Nations, but did little to achieve any real ends in the 'war on terror.'⁵¹

The final means of dealing with the legitimacy threat facing the Kingdom has been repression. This particular method was used heavily in the mid-1990s when many of the influential reformists were either imprisoned or forced into exile.⁵² Since the renewed attacks of 2003, the Kingdom's emphasis has been on the radicals rather than the reformists, yet those reformists who are too out-spoken (according to the Kingdom) are often silenced through imprisonment or exile.⁵³ To determine who the dissenters are, the royal family employs an internal security service called *Mabahith al-Amma*.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, at the expense of the Kingdom's legitimacy, this kind of action merely reinforces the reformist argument that there is not enough political openness.

The contradictions Saudi Arabia faces with regard to ensuring its legitimacy are many and complicated. They alone constrict the Kingdom's ability to face this particular threat.

⁵⁰ The Bush Administration refused for unknown reasons.

⁵¹ "Riyadh Declaration" (Transcript of Counter-Terrorism International Conference, Hosted by The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, February 5-8 2005).

⁵² Daryl Champion, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Elements of Instability within Stability," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 4 (December 1999).

⁵³ "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?," 6; Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 275.

⁵⁴ Champion, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Elements of Instability within Stability."

Additionally, the Kingdom faces a simultaneous security threat which seeks to constrict Saudi Arabia's means of response in other ways as well.

Response to Security Threat

Whereas the legitimacy threat comes from the ideology of Islamism, the security threat is directly attributed to the violent and radical manifestation of this ideology. Saudi Arabia has declared its intent to remove the Islamist threat from the Kingdom. Saudi officials refer to three objectives in the Kingdom's response: first, to catch the terrorists; second, to impede the financing of the terrorists; and third, to change the mindset of those who support terrorism. This section will discuss the methods and progress of Saudi Arabia with regard to these goals.

Adel al-Jubayr, the Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Crown Prince, clarified the Kingdom's means of capturing the terrorists. He said Saudi Arabia's mission was to "go after the terrorists, to pursue them with vigor, to capture and kill their leaders, to disrupt their supplies, to capture their arms caches, to unravel their safe houses, [and] to prevent them from recruiting our youth."⁵⁵ Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain the achievements of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has been open about its capture and prosecution of radicals, but the numbers and methods are less clear. Two reports compiled by the Saudi government, one in 2003 and the other in September 2004, state that Saudi Arabia has questioned more than 1500 suspects, arrested 600 suspects, dismantled al-Qaida cells, and extradited suspects to other countries to face justice.⁵⁶ There is evidence that at least some reports are embellished, but even in the face of exaggeration, the Kingdom has actively been arresting and convicting Islamists since September 11th.⁵⁷

Although Saudi Arabia has had some success in capturing or killing violent Islamists, it must also get to the heart of the Islamist network, most specifically, the financial network. The international community has pressed the Kingdom to freeze the assets of alleged terrorists and

⁵⁵ Adel Al-Jubayr, "Campaign against Extremism" (Transcript of Press Conference, Hosted by Royal Saudi Embassy, March 7, 2005).

⁵⁶ "Initiatives and Actions Taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the War on Terrorism," Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2003; "Initiatives and Actions Taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Combat Terrorism," Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, September 2004. The 2004 report has nine pages of detail about arrests and questioning of suspects.

⁵⁷ Cordesman, *The Military and International Security Dimensions*, 274.

monitor the actions of charities. Saudi Arabia has undertaken these objectives,⁵⁸ but it is limited by the traditions of Islamic society. *Zakat* represents a duty by all Muslims to donate part of their income for purposes of helping the less fortunate. These donations are supposed to be entirely anonymous according to the faith, so Saudi Arabia has had a difficult time imposing restrictions or monitoring mechanisms on the practice. Despite the difficulties, the Kingdom has established an organization to monitor charitable donations. Adel al-Jubayr stated in a press conference that “no Saudi charity is allowed to send one riyal outside the Kingdom without strict government oversight.”⁵⁹ In addition, there are now regulations whereby charities must have a single-disbursement account, cross-border cash-giving is illegal, coin and currency collection is no longer allowed in mosques, and unlicensed money exchange houses have been closed. In addition, the Kingdom has established a modern anti-money-laundering system.⁶⁰ These are major changes, especially the abolition of currency collection in mosques.

Despite these efforts, the financial network of al-Qaida remains elusive and active. Mark Basile of Tufts University has detailed this financial network. He suggests that the decentralized nature of al-Qaida’s financial network makes it self-sufficient and regenerative in a way that is difficult to interrupt. The network is entirely too flexible for conventional means to prevent cash flow. First, its operational doctrine of self-sufficiency for each cell makes spending practices frugal and disjointed. Second, al-Qaida continues to run profitable businesses in many parts of the developing world, such as the illicit diamond industry in Liberia and Burkina Faso and the legitimate business of honey trading. These can easily be effective covers for terrorist activities. Finally, al-Qaida has a continual influx of money from Islamic charities. Many Islamic charities are very large and engaged in various forms of charity. Because the objectives of charities are often noble and humanitarian, it is difficult to shut them down because of alleged connections to Islamist causes. For this reason and because donations from charities are “clean money,” al-Qaida tends to get most of its funds in this way.⁶¹ Despite its efforts to the contrary, Saudi Arabia will continue to have a difficult time limiting the financial sources of al-Qaida.

⁵⁸ "Initiatives and Actions Taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Combat Terrorism." This report details the specific actions taken by the Saudi government in nine pages.

⁵⁹ Al-Jubayr, "Campaign against Extremism."

⁶⁰ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern, and Hussein Shobokshi, "Saudi Arabia: Enemy or Friend?" (Transcript of Thirty-Fifth Capitol Hill Conference Series on U.S. Middle East Policy, Hosted by Middle East Policy Council, Dirksen Senate Office Building, January 23, 2004).

⁶¹ Mark Basile, "Going to the Source: Why Al Qaeda's Financial Network Is Likely to Withstand the Current War on Terrorist Financing," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (2004): 171-179.

Saudi Arabia has dealt with the security threat posed by Islamists by targeting the people, the finances, and the ideology. However, each of these are self-perpetuating and difficult to fully eradicate. In addition, the Kingdom tends to use conventional methods to alleviate these problems, yet the threat is an unconventional one. The nature of response must change to accommodate the nature of threat.

Conclusion

Due to its location and the volatility of the Middle East in the last century, Saudi Arabia has faced many threats to its legitimacy and its security. In many ways, these threats remain the same as they were during the mid-century. The legitimacy and security threats are an outgrowth of the same problems confronting the Kingdom during the nationalist movement. Despite the similarities, this particular time period represents a much greater threat than the Kingdom has ever faced. The questions concerning the royal family's legitimacy have been latent for many decades, but the Kuwait War brought those to the forefront. The royal family should take into account the reasons why Islamism appeals to activists and sympathizers alike because these reasons are the foundation of the Kingdom's legitimacy crisis. Simultaneously, the Kingdom is facing internal security threats on a continual basis through bomb attacks. The threat which delegitimizes and destabilizes the Kingdom is bi-modal as never before. If the Kingdom is to survive in its current form, the historical pattern of response must change to account for this kind of threat. Stephen Schwartz suggests that "Saudi Arabia has begun a period in which it is increasingly difficult for the ruling power to govern in the way it previously did."⁶² Saudi Arabia has been known for its ability to endure threats through patience and persistence. As a consequence of the dynamic nature of history, threats often recede as quickly as they arise. However, Islamism represents a powerful and persuasive ideology that has consistently permeated Saudi society since mid-century. More importantly, this 'ideology' has a military arm. The Kingdom is, therefore, faced with pressures that do not represent a mere phase, but rather, a pervasive and insidious threat that cannot be simply endured. Saudi Arabia will have to respond directly to this threat or else its entire political system may be undermined.

⁶² Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 259-260.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has not been to predict the fall of the Saudi monarchy, though that event is plausible under current circumstances; instead, the purpose has been to elaborate on the nature of threat within Saudi Arabia. Islamism represents a qualitatively different kind of threat to the stable continuity of the Kingdom since it merges religious legitimacy and state security concerns in a way that compromises traditional methods of response. Like many other scholars, Mahmud Faksh argues,

“The Saudi monarchy has demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for survival. Over the past half century, it has withstood the Arab nationalist sweep, the Iranian Islamic revolutionary wave, and the Iraqi military threat. And it will certainly prevail against today’s Islamist challenge. The monarchy will be able to sustain itself...by using a mix of moderate political reforms tempered by religious conservatism.... Benevolent authoritarian monarchy will probably persist into the twenty-first century.”¹

Faksh is correct in saying the monarchy has endured many threats. However, this thesis shows that each new threat augments the same predicaments, tensions, and paradoxes that were present in previous eras. Each time, the severity is magnified in an almost exponential way. Presently, Islamism represents the most serious threat yet faced because the legitimacy and security threats are greater than before *and* there is the unique combination of threat. To call Islamism “a challenge” is a severe underestimation. Faksh’s argument represents a common, yet short-sighted perspective on the threat confronting the Kingdom. The monarchy will likely be able to endure these troubles for some time, but if major changes in response do not take place, then patience will not be enough to carry the royal family through this era.

If the Al Saud dynasty were to become so destabilized as to no longer have control of Saudi Arabia, what would take its place? This is a question posed, and less often answered, by scholars. Predictions of this nature are difficult and presumptuous. Scholars tend to agree that Saudi Arabia does not face the possibility of an Iranian-style revolution. Political opposition is much too fragmented for such a revolution. The disjointed nature of the opposition, however, does not mean “there is no concrete alternative to the Al Saud” as Daryl Champion suggests.² It

¹ Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, 103.

² Champion, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Elements of Instability within Stability."

merely means that the alternative, in whatever form it takes, may be just as illegitimate as the current rule. If one of the specific segments of opposition were to gain control, they will likely not have the support of the general public any more than the royal family does now. As an additional alternative, the possibility of a military coup has been suggested for decades. This has informed the royal family's decision to maintain a small military. Due to the secretive shroud around Saudi Arabia, it is difficult for outsiders (and probably the royal family itself) to truly know the alternatives to the current rule. However, the lack of specific speculations does not decrease the threat of destabilization in Saudi Arabia; therefore, the royal family must change its nature of response to the threats it faces.

Scholars tend to suggest three particular policy responses to the unique threat of Islamism: the promotion of economic development, the repression or containment of radicalism, and political reform. The first two responses represent a misunderstanding of the root causes of Islamism. The promotion of economic development assumes that Islamism arises from poverty when in fact, it does not. Scott Atran argues this point with supporting statistics. He comes to the conclusion that suicide terrorists (in particular) are not poor relative to other members of the society in which they live.³ As Mohammed Hafez states, "Economic deprivation may feed the grievances of ordinary Muslims, but it is not the underlying cause of their rebellions."⁴

The second suggested response to Islamism is repression or what has been referred to as containment. Western governments often turn a blind eye to human rights violations because they are perceived as a lesser evil than Islamism. However, the assumption that repressing radicalism will alleviate it is deeply flawed. Hafez argues, "...repression does not always work and may actually expand, not lessen, Islamist violence."⁵ Repression, especially in the political form, radicalizes Islamist movements and forces them to organize and work underground. Larbi Sadiki suggests, "Stripping critics of their citizenship, exiling them, or jailing them are all short of sophisticated politics.... Closing all avenues of legalized dialogue, political expression, organisation and representation radicalises many activists."⁶ The answer to tempering or eradicating Islamism lies not in repressing these movements but in allowing these movements a political voice under terms that support non-violent conditions.

³ Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299, no. 5612 (2003).

⁴ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2003), 205.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶ Sadiki, "Saudi Arabia: Re-Reading Politics and Religion in the Wake of September 11," 44.

Political reform is the third policy prescription suggested by scholars. This represents the only viable response to the Islamist threat within Saudi Arabia. If the goals of the Kingdom are to sustain the monarchy and weaken the Islamist threat, then Saudi Arabia must commit to low-level reform. The options currently available to the Saudi polity must be redefined so as to channel the reformist desires while simultaneously marginalizing the radicals. Stable continuity can only be attained through a recasting of the political landscape that achieves a balance between the current closed political system and a secularized, democratic political system. The current closed system does not allow avenues for grievances, so these grievances can manifest themselves in violent action. On the other hand, a secular, democratic system would erode the monarchy, which is an unacceptable option to the royal family. If the system remains closed, Islamism will blossom, but if the system becomes too open, Saudi Arabia may find itself in a Gorbachevian predicament. Therefore, if stable continuity is the goal, the Kingdom should restructure the political spectrum somewhere between these two options to allow for political access and institutional inclusiveness.

Specifically, institutional inclusiveness and political access represent realistic policy goals that Saudi Arabia could and should achieve. Institutional inclusiveness refers to the establishment of political institutions through which Saudis can petition the government.⁷ Saudi tradition relies on informal, non-institutional forms of consensus-building, but this traditional form no longer grants the royal family the kind of legitimacy it did in the past. To allow political access, Saudi Arabia needs to grant and institutionalize the right of association. As it currently stands, the only readily available platform for organization is the mosque which itself has been limited since late 2002.⁸ Other forms of social or political association are strictly forbidden or monitored. Neither 'political access' nor 'institutional inclusion' call for such liberal measures as the formation of interest groups or political parties which would be unacceptable to the royal family. As Hafez argues, "Exclusive politics is a recipe for disaster, but inclusive politics is the key to survival."⁹ This is especially true in light of the call for reforms since the 1991 Kuwait War. The Saudi government will no longer be able to buy the allegiance of its subjects through the welfare state and non-taxation policies. Champion suggests that the 'welfare state' which

⁷ This chapter will use the language developed by Mohammed Hafez of 'institutional inclusiveness.'

⁸ "Mosques Not to Be Used as Political Platforms," Press Release. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, December 7, 2002.

⁹ Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, 207.

arose from the oil boom has attenuated with lower oil profits.¹⁰ Sadiki argues that eventually “Saudis will have to pay taxes and subsequently demand representation and a share of the ‘political cake.’”¹¹ She states further that political inclusion is necessary for the Kingdom to attain stability and legitimacy.¹² Indeed, these calls for reform have heightened in the last two decades to a degree that cannot go unnoticed in the royal family.

To combat Islamism, Saudi Arabia needs to encourage the reformists in order to marginalize the radicals. Allowing political access for the reformists could create a political willingness that attracts those wishing to change the political system. If political goals (no matter how small) are met on the part of the reformists, this could create a sense of efficacy that would work to erode the legitimacy of violent groups like al-Qaida. Currently, violence is perceived as the only means available for change. Political closure leads to a vicious cycle of violence. Any kind of political openness can impede that cycle and erode the legitimacy that nurtures violence. Political history, in the Middle East, Western Europe, and elsewhere, has demonstrated that policies of institutional inclusiveness and political access have succeeded in moderating radical movements.¹³ Institutionalism encourages compromise and cooperation rather than violence and extremism.

Though political access and inclusiveness should be a part of the solution to Islamism, there must be parameters to encourage non-violence and national loyalty. Hafez suggests, “Although the line between moderates and radicals may be fluid and not always distinguishable, . . . governments could force Islamists to choose sides by establishing enforceable rules and parameters of acceptable political conduct. . . .”¹⁴ In other words, Saudi Arabia should allow the reformists a political voice, but not the radicals, under the condition that political participation remain peaceful. Political inclusion must be accompanied by rules that prohibit violence as supplementary political action. Hafez argues that Jordan found success in this method by allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to organize legally and participate politically.¹⁵ Saudi Arabia could also find success in allowing reformist groups political and institutional access.

¹⁰ Champion, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Elements of Instability within Stability."

¹¹ Sadiki, "Saudi Arabia: Re-Reading Politics and Religion in the Wake of September 11," 44.

¹² Ibid., 47.

¹³ For many examples, see Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, 208-209.

¹⁴ Ibid., 207.

¹⁵ Ibid.

As a positive step toward reform, the late King Fahd and King Abdullah¹⁶ have pursued low-level inclusiveness and political access through the *Majlis al-Shura*. This consultative council was formed in 1993 in response to the ‘age of petitions.’ Though the members remained appointed rather than elected, it is plausible that a new generation of reformists will push the government toward elected *Majlis* members. The *Majlis* has the potential to represent an institution through which subjects can petition the government and raise concerns. At present, the *Majlis* can propose and debate new bills without the King’s approval.¹⁷ Such an institution may alleviate many of the legitimacy problems the Kingdom faces by giving subjects a formal channel to voice their political demands. Already, the council includes Shii members which is a step toward alleviating the religious tensions in Saudi Arabia. The increasing accessibility of the *Majlis* could marginalize more radical elements in society that thrive off of the exclusive nature of political society.

Under the rule of King Abdullah (then Crown Prince), the Kingdom introduced local elections for municipal councils, though women are not allowed to stand for election nor vote, and only half of the seats are elected. In addition, King Abdullah has allowed for National Dialogues to take place which have allowed Saudis to discuss sensitive issues more openly. Thus far, the Dialogues have concentrated on a range of issues from religious intolerance to women’s rights. The fifth Dialogue is scheduled for December of 2005 to discuss educational issues. Despite their limited nature, these kinds of institutional changes are potential pathways to alleviating legitimacy threats and security threats simultaneously.

Fortunately for the survival of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah is attempting to restore a balance to the Kingdom’s policies. He is pursuing what historians call ‘Faysal’s order’ which refers to a former King whose rule is commonly seen as one of the stable periods for Saudi Arabia. Abdullah has “developed a reputation for relative frugality” which is fortunate in a Kingdom where corruption charges can be most damaging.¹⁸ Abdullah has been reasonably effective at balancing the desires of the Kingdom’s Arab neighbors, the United States, opposition

¹⁶ King Fahd’s death was announced by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on August 1, 2005. Therefore, Abdullah is now the King and no longer the Crown Prince. However, all of his actions referred to in this thesis were performed while he was the Crown Prince. He has acted on behalf of King Fahd since 1995.

¹⁷ "Political and Economic Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, September 2004.

¹⁸ Steve Coll, "Rivalries May yet Emerge in a Complex Succession," *Washington Post*, August 2, 2005. This article also points out that “Sultan has been an unusually persistent magnet for allegations of corruption” which may be problematic for the Kingdom if and when he succeeds Abdullah.

movements, and the reformists. First, he tends to stress regional relationships over the relationship with the United States. By drawing away from the United States in some ways, Abdullah is attempting to avoid legitimacy challenges.¹⁹ However, simultaneously, he has allowed a stronger relationship with the United States regarding the 'war on terror.' As an additional balance, Abdullah has accommodated opposition movements through actions such as the release of several jailed dissidents. Yet, he has cracked down on violence. To appease the more modern reformists, he has introduced internet access to the Kingdom and, in some ways, increased the freedom of women.²⁰ He understands that to achieve the kind of legitimacy and security the Kingdom needs, he must balance all of these forces. Joshua Teitelbaum refers to this as a "balanced combination of openness."²¹ In return, Abdullah is favored by the opposition to a greater degree than King Fahd was. Despite King Abdullah's efforts, social and political discontent continues.

Assuming King Abdullah were able to strike a reasonable balance within the Kingdom, his age remains a concern. Alain Gresh suggests, "...it is the age of the leaders that threatens the stability of the monarchy."²² King Abdullah, who recently succeeded to the throne upon the death of King Fahd, and his newly-appointed successor, Crown Prince Sultan, are approximately 82 and 81, respectively. Both have suffered from poor health in recent years, so it is likely within the next decade or so, Saudi Arabia will have a new generation of leaders. Unfortunately, little is known about this new generation of leaders, including who they might be. Having younger leaders may mean a more modern Saudi Kingdom increasingly open to the idea of political change. Alternatively, having been accustomed to a high-class life as princes, the rise to power of younger leaders may mean higher levels of corruption and economic mismanagement.²³ Not knowing who the leaders may be is disconcerting in itself because it implies the possibility of difficult succession battles, multiple leader changes in a short period of time, or a radical changes in the way the Kingdom is ruled. These possibilities are increasingly important to consider since

¹⁹ Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom*, 178.

²⁰ Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, Policy Papers, no. 52 (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

²¹ Joshua Teitelbaum, "More Continuity Than Change: Saudi Arabia after the Passing of King Fahd," *Tel Aviv Notes*, no. 142 (August 2, 2005).

²² Gresh, "The Most Obscure Dictatorship," 7.

²³ Prince Nayef, the interior minister in his early seventies, is a possibility for succession. He adamantly defends Saudi policies and tends to be suspicious of the West. He is best known for his initial claims that Saudis were not part of the September 11 attacks. Prince Ahmad, the deputy interior minister in his mid-sixties, is also a possibility. To my knowledge, he has not developed a particular reputation.

the new generation of leaders will almost certainly enter the world stage in less than two decades.

Montesquieu remarks that as rivers flow into the sea, monarchies deteriorate into despotisms.²⁴ Perhaps for Saudi Arabia, this is the greatest threat of all; therefore, the Kingdom must engage in political reform through institutional inclusiveness and political access for all subjects. Only then can the Saudi royal family turn the tide of simultaneous security and legitimacy threats in favor of the stable continuity of its monarchy.

²⁴ Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1914). Translated quote: “The rivers hasten to mingle their waters with the sea; and monarchies lose themselves in despotic power.”

APPENDIX A: FURTHER RESEARCH

Threat and Threat Response

The analytical key to this thesis has been the concept of threat. A discourse on this analytical concept does not exist aside from Johan Eriksson's book called Threat Politics. Even this book conflates concepts such as risk and threat without establishing a semi-universal understanding of the meaning behind 'threat.' Using a combination of this book and the literature on security studies, I attempted to create the beginnings of a discussion of threat. Of course, this thesis applies it to Saudi Arabia specifically, but the concept could be helpful in many other contexts.

Decision-making processes in situations involving threat should be treated as unique. A threat lies somewhere between a crisis which is immediate and a risk which is statistical. This creates a distinctive environment for policy-making that should be explored. How do decision-making processes change as a situation moves from a risk to a threat to a crisis? What kind of policies are enacted in each scenario, and how effective are they? A concept of 'threat' applies to many fields – from those who study bureaucratic decision-making processes to those who study realism, power, and policy response. At the least, the concept of threat should be applied to foreign policy discussions, and at the best, it should be given standing as a creditable analytical concept like 'power' or 'security.'

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Together with the goal of exploring Saudi Arabia's unique circumstances with regard to Islamism, this thesis has been an attempt to shift the dialogue about Saudi Arabia away from oil and its relationship with the United States. It seems as though the books and articles written on these two topics over the last few decades are without end. From an analytical perspective, this is disappointing because it reflects a dire underdevelopment of the literature on Saudi Arabian politics, decision-making, and policy-making. To assume one can understand Saudi Arabia by only analyzing its economy and the United States' foreign policies toward the Kingdom is a gross mistake. For such an important *strategic* partner in the Middle East, the discourse lacks in

any substantial *strategic* discussion of Saudi Arabia. This thesis attempts to stand in contrast to the current literature that overemphasizes oil and the ‘oil-for-protection’ relationship.

In addition, the literature tends to engage in a discussion of what the United States wants from Saudi Arabia, and from this discussion, policy prescriptions arise. For this reason, unreasonable recommendations, such as the call for complete democracy, develop. This is irresponsible scholarship. I suggest that if we want to know how to confront Saudi Arabia from a policy perspective, Saudi Arabia must be understood *on its own terms* before prescribing policies that the United States and international community should advocate.

Research questions tend to focus on what Saudi Arabia can do for the United States or whether Saudi Arabia is a threat. In these kind of analyses, Saudi Arabia is the object of the discussion rather than the subject. In contrast to many writers, this thesis puts Saudi Arabia at the center of the argument. Beginning with the assumption that studying threat would inevitably lead to the study of foreign policy, I discovered instead that domestic and foreign policy are intertwined. Anthony Cordesman was correct when he stated, “[The Kingdom] has sometimes paid more attention to foreign policy than more pressing internal problems, and it has focused on external threats when internal stability and cohesion is really its best guarantee of security. ...The Kingdom is more threatened from within than without.”¹ These kinds of realizations are essential *even if* the writer’s end goal is to discuss the United States’ relationship with the Kingdom.

Though this thesis is an attempt to begin a discussion of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, there are many areas of necessary research outside the parameters of my argument. For example, I chose to treat Saudi Arabia as a unitary actor in order to analyze threat and response, yet the degree of personalized politics within the Kingdom should also be studied. A more general level of analysis plus the more specific, personal level, when put together, could be especially useful when predicting or understanding Saudi policy. The more general level of analysis focuses on cultural values and norms as parameters for decision-making. In addition, it allows one to notice patterns in policy making that may not be apparent with a personalized study of leaders and their decisions. The personalized study, however, has the benefit of explaining any fluctuations in decision-making patterns. For example, King Saud was an unstable leader who enacted policies unlike other Saudi leaders. This kind of study also provides

¹ Cordesman, *The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, 122.

the foundation for a discussion of what effective leadership in Saudi Arabia means. For example, was King Faysal more effective than King Saud? Was he more effective than King Abdullah seeks to be? These kinds of questions, and the debates they provoke, are necessary elements to include in one's thinking before suggesting policy prescriptions, either for Saudi Arabia or for United States' policy toward the Kingdom.

The Middle East deserves the kind of study that goes beyond simple characterizations and biased cultural perceptions that tend toward the denigration of Arab culture and political life. As scholars, we should not seek to understand the Middle East in order to 'fix' it. This indicates the same colonial mentality that has already left a mark on the Arab world. Furthermore, we should not attempt to box Arab states, people, and ways of life into our own *ethos* or conceptions of rationality. In so doing, we lose our ability to understand, to possibly empathize, and to enact policies that seek to make people's lives – Arab, Western, and otherwise – more fulfilling and peaceful.

**APPENDIX B:
TENSIONS IN THREAT RESPONSE**

When facing particular tensions, Saudi Arabia’s response often diminishes one threat while inflaming another. This chart demonstrates five particular tensions, the Saudi Arabian response, and the resulting problem. In the first three examples, the legitimacy threat is attenuated, but the security threat is augmented. The opposite is true for the last two examples.

- ☞ **Tension 1: Saudi Relationship with U.S.**

 - ☛ Response: Kingdom Downplays Relationship *Legitimacy Threat* ↓
 - ☛ Result: Weakens War-on-Terror Collaboration *Security Threat* ↑

- ☞ **Tension 2: Legitimacy Crisis**

 - ☛ Response: Promote Wahhabi Principles *Legitimacy Threat* ↓
 - ☛ Result: Encourages Radical Ideology *Security Threat* ↑

- ☞ **Tension 3: Reformist Petitions / Grievances**

 - ☛ Response: Politically Repress Islamists *Legitimacy Threat* ↓
 - ☛ Result: Legitimizes Islamist Claims *Security Threat* ↑

- ☞ **Tension 4: Domestic Terrorist Attacks**

 - ☛ Response: War-on-Terror Cooperation with U.S. *Security Threat* ↓
 - ☛ Result: Inflames Resentment of U.S. Relationship *Legitimacy Threat* ↑

- ☞ **Tension 5: Security Crisis**

 - ☛ Response: Build a Strong Military *Security Threat* ↓
 - ☛ Result: Fear of Military Coup *Legitimacy Threat* ↑

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