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# Saudi Arabia in International Politics

Robert R. Sullivan

**S**AUDI ARABIA<sup>1</sup> as a state has rarely been an object of interest for political scientists in the West, and the reasons for this are clear.<sup>2</sup> Fluid in the location of her territory, lacking power and a sense of threat to her vital interests, encumbered with a xenophobic religion and a society in compressed transition from a nomadic to a feudal way of life, Saudi Arabia until the mid-1950's was inactive in international politics, even at the regional level. Like the United States and Russia in the early stages of their national development, Saudi Arabia first found her energies absorbed in affairs that could only with difficulty be distinguished as "domestic" or "foreign." Saudi Arabia's main concern was to consolidate a territorially and socially expanding habitat and thereby to become an Arab state equal in scope with the Arabian peninsula. Specifically, this meant expansion in a south-easterly direction to the outermost limits possible, for Saudi Arabian power was too limited to challenge the more established positions of Great Britain in Iraq and Transjordan in the north. Only when revenues derived from oil resources being exploited by ARAMCO (the Arabian-American Oil Company) provided Saudi Arabia with the economic base of modern power and when revolutionary pan-Arabism gave her a political rationale for exercising her growing power did she begin to pursue a consistent "foreign" policy at the regional level.

The Arab state system took on structure in the mid-1950's when the conservative Iraqis attempted to spearhead the Baghdad

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to Miss Claire Sanford for skilfully editing this paper.

<sup>2</sup> There are no systematic and comprehensive studies of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy or of the country's role in international politics. J. B. Kelly has written excellent descriptive analyses of Saudi Arabia's relation with her neighbors in Northeast Arabia (footnote 26), as has Manfred Wenner on Saudi Arabia's relations with the Yemen (footnote 6). Kelly also published a fine survey of political problems in and around Arabia in *International Affairs* (London: October, 1966). The only competent country study is G. A. Lipsky, *Saudi Arabia* (Human Resources Area File: New Haven, 1959). Another competent work, mainly economic in focus, is by K. S. Twitchell, *Saudi Arabia* (3rd ed.: Princeton, 1959). A well-written biography that yields a good picture of the first fifty years of Saudi Arabia is David Howarth's *The Desert King, Ibn Saud and His Arabia* (New York, 1964). Harry Philby's works are on the whole disappointing, and periodical literature is even less helpful than book literature.

Pact's expansion into the Fertile Crescent. In the context of a worsening situation over Suez, Nasser took it upon himself to counter Nuri es-Said's expansionist diplomacy. By 1955 the Arab world was clearly ordering itself along bipolar lines, with Nasser's Egypt leading the revolutionary Arab nationalists and Nuri's Iraq leading the conservative Arabs. Moreover, the organizing bipolarity of the Arab state system was becoming linked to the well-developed bipolarity of the global state system, since Nasser had begun to look to the Soviet bloc for outside support to counter the support Nuri was receiving from the West. The stakes in the Arab conflict were the areas between the Nile and the Mesopotamian rivals — namely, Syria and Jordan — and the major means of pursuing victory was subversion, primarily through radio propaganda aimed at mobilizing the Arab "street." Nasser's unexpected 1957 breakthrough in Syria, precipitated as much by outside pressures originating in the Soviet-American competition as by Nasser's efforts, was followed by the bloody overthrow of Nuri and the Hashimite Dynasty in Iraq and their replacement by the enigmatic but most certainly radical General Kassem. In early 1958 it briefly appeared that the Arab state system would be terminated and Arab unity of sorts restored *via* the seemingly irresistible force of revolutionary Arab nationalism. But Kassem's ideology proved to be too radical for Nasser's liking, and in any case Iraq would not kowtow to Egypt. Consequently, the basic power equilibrium of the Arab state system was not altered.

The most dramatic shift in the structure, stakes, and scope of the Arab state system occurred not in 1958 but rather in 1962: Saudi Arabia replaced Iraq as one of the two major antagonists in the bipolar state system, ideology once again came to parallel the dominant political conflict, and the Yemen took on equal importance with the Fertile Crescent as a stake in inter-Arab competition, thereby expanding the scope of the system to include outermost Arabia as well as Jordan and Syria. Feeling itself threatened by the pincers of Arab radicalism emanating from Cairo and moving eastwards through the Fertile Crescent and southwards through the Red Sea en route to their decisive meeting in the oil rich Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia emerged in the 1960's as the leader of the conservative Arab states in the context of the Arab state system. Consciously or not, *Einkreisung* — the myth of threatening encirclement — became a major psychological factor in Saudi

Arabian foreign policy. And once again, as in the mid-1950's, the Arab state system became linked to the global state system, with Saudi Arabia allying itself closely with the United States to offset the close Egyptian and radical Arab ties to the Soviet Union and, to a lesser but growing extent, to China.

The argument to be developed in the first section of this paper may be stated here in a few sentences. Saudi Arabian foreign policy prior to 1962 was inconsistent and even haphazard because Saudi Arabia had no key functional role in an equilibrated state system. In 1962 she gained the systemic context which clearly defined her function as that of the conservative great power in conflict with radical outside powers, primarily Nasser's Egypt. Saudi Arabia's prescribed policy then became that of maintaining the system's equilibrium, its balance of power. In effect, Saudi Arabia pursues a balance of power policy in a subordinate regional state system. Analogous state systems, such as those in Greece in the fifth century B.C., in Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and throughout the world in the period of the Cold War, provide guidelines for this study because they have demonstrated a number of characteristics which one would expect to find in the bipolar Arab state system: first, ideological conflict between the expansionist great power (which must have an ideological myth to justify its expansionism) and the defensive great power (which feels compelled to develop a myth to counter the expansionist ideology); secondly and more importantly, a number of actual political conflicts in which the expansionist power is trying to extend itself and the conservative, defensive power attempts to "contain" the revolutionary state.

Specifically, the argument of this paper is that Saudi Arabia has performed approximately along the lines of the model set forth here. Saudi Arabia has developed an appropriate ideology but, in contrast to Nasser's Egypt, where ideology often appears to be the reason for policy, in Saudi Arabia's case it is clearly a minor tool of foreign policy. Saudi Arabia has not become so obsessed with a belief in the superiority of her way of life or so convinced that Nasser's radical ideology really is the end toward which Egypt bends its efforts that she undertakes a foreign policy designed to roll back Arab radicalism. In the style of a true conservative state, Saudi Arabia acts much more than it speaks, and its actions are for the most part consistently defensive. The cardinal rule of

Saudi Arabian statecraft is that no outside power — above all Egypt or its patron, the Soviet Union — shall be allowed to gain control of any of the small and weak states that border on Saudi Arabia, especially those of the Arabian littoral. Obliquely, this operational premise defines what Saudi Arabia considers to be its sphere of influence; it includes every state bordering on her, except Iraq. Saudi Arabia is not especially active in political conflicts that take place in states beyond those on her borders, mainly because their outcome cannot affect her vital interests.

This article will first examine ideology in Saudi Arabian foreign policy and then analyze Saudi Arabia's behavior in the specific conflicts that have occurred or may occur in the areas bordering on Saudi Arabia. Thereafter, the analysis will move to the wider context of the global state system to determine what role Saudi Arabia plays there and to what extent it derives from and affects her role in the regional Arab state system.

## I

Saudi Arabia's unique advantage in Arab politics and its distinguishing feature in the Arab mind is that it contains in its borders two of the three Muslim holy cities, Mecca and Medina. It is also the only modern Arab state that can rightly claim to be the offspring of an Islamic revival movement, Wahhabism, a Sunni sect. Consequently, Saudi Arabian foreign policy has at its disposal a potentially powerful ideological weapon with which to respond to the appeals of secular Arab radicalism.

King Abdul Aziz (the usual Saudi Arabian name of Ibn Saud) had no occasion to exploit Islam as an ideology in a political contest with a foreign power, and King Saud failed to do so when confronted with militant Nasserism in the late 1950's. Only King Faisal has used Islam as a tool of foreign policy, and he has done so cautiously. The first time Faisal used Islam to counter the radical Arab faith was at the end of 1965, after the failure of the Jidda Agreement to restore peace in the Yemen. In the renewed struggle for Arab leadership and Arab unity Faisal emerged as an ideological contender with Nasser and the Baathists by advocating an "Islamic Entente."<sup>3</sup> In January, 1966, Syria, the first

<sup>3</sup> See A. Kelidar, "Struggle for Arab Unity," *World Today* (July, 1967). Faisal used the term *Entente*, which traditionally has had a milder meaning than alliance.

radical Arab state to condemn Faisal as a reactionary called a conference of the five revolutionary Arab states in Damascus to counter what it perceived to be a projected conservative alliance. Since this was also one of the innumerable Syrian bids to wrest ideological leadership of Arab radicalism away from Cairo, little came of the countermove. Meanwhile, the proposed Islamic Entente was not standing still. The first state to follow the lead offered by Faisal was, somewhat unexpectedly, Somalia. In August, 1966, its President Osman on a visit to Riyadh called for the convening of an "Islamic Summit Conference."<sup>4</sup> The revolutionary Arabs reacted with predictable scorn, but since Faisal did not follow up on President Osman's plea, nothing came of the matter. The only subsequent reactivation of the idea of an Islamic entente was in November, 1968, when the Shah of Iran was on a state visit to Saudi Arabia, but this too proved to be little more than an expression of conservative sentiment.<sup>5</sup>

The failure to get beyond the stage of sentiment does not lessen the significance of this aspect of Saudi Arabian foreign policy. Insofar as Faisal's sponsorship of the idea of an Islamic entente offered a conservative ideological response to revolutionary Arab nationalism, it set up Faisal and Saudi Arabia as the political opposition to Nasser and Egypt. It thereby demonstrated Saudi Arabia's conscious acceptance of conservative leadership. In addition, the obviously secondary importance of Islamic ideology pointed toward the conservative discipline of current Saudi Arabian foreign policy. In the early part of this century, crusading Wahhabism served as the primary motive force behind Saudi Arabian expansionism. Its relative decline indicated that Saudi Arabia had outgrown its political adolescence. In the 1960's the resurrection of the Islamic theme in Saudi Arabian foreign policy clearly has been half-hearted. The remarkable aspect of the movement to form an Islamic entente was that it happened at all, and the explanation for it is to be found in the nature of the Arab state system and the challenge posed by Cairo rather than in the style of Saudi Arabia or its leader, King Faisal.

No set of actual political conflicts better exemplifies Saudi Arabia's conservative balance of power policy than the two con-

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<sup>4</sup> See D. C. Watt, "Postponement of the Arab Summit," *World Today* (September, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 14, 1968.

flicts on the southern tip of Arabia.<sup>6</sup> For the five years from the Yemeni *coup d'état* of 1962 and the first investment of Egyptian troops to bolster the Republican regime until the withdrawal of Egypt's 70,000 troops from the Yemen after Egypt's June, 1967, defeat by Israel, Faisal followed a policy designed to fuel the Royalist effort to the point where it could easily stalemate Nasser's forces but not to the point where the Egyptians would be humiliated by a military disaster. In many respects, Faisal's policy in the Yemeni War is analagous to Soviet policy in fueling the Vietnam conflict. And just as in Vietnam the Soviets often came into conflict with the more militant and reckless Chinese, so in Yemen Faisal's decisive but tightly reined support often betrayed that Saudi Arabia's regional interests were in conflict with the local interests of its Royalist ally. The Royalists, for the most part unconcerned with the regional implications of their conflict, believed they could "win" the war, if only Saudi Arabia would give greater aid. Faisal, however, was keenly aware of the risk that an Egyptian defeat might result not in Egyptian withdrawal but, rather, in the local conflict-by-proxy escalating to a direct regional encounter between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. For Faisal to attain his limited aims, such a confrontation was simply not necessary.

Prior to June, 1967, there were indications that Faisal's policy was changing from one aimed at stalemate to one aimed at defeating the incorrigibly recalcitrant Egyptians. The attempt of United States diplomats to mediate the Yemeni conflict in 1963 failed mainly because Egypt was unwilling to grasp the opportunity.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Alexandria Accord of 1964 was undertaken by Nasser only in the wake of the failure of a Republican offensive. As soon as Nasser sensed new opportunities for success in the Yemeni War, he allowed the peace momentum to falter.<sup>8</sup> But most galling for Faisal must have been the aftermath of the Jidda Agreement of 1965, which was made after Royalist military operations in the spring and summer of 1965 had regained one-third of the territory held by the Egyptians.<sup>9</sup> Nasser reportedly

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<sup>6</sup> By far the best study of Yemeni politics is Manfred Wenner's *Modern Yemen, 1918-1966* (Baltimore, 1967). See, also, Harold Ingrams' *The Yemen, Imams, Rulers, and Revolutionaries* (New York, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Wenner, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-210.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>9</sup> The Jidda Agreement is reprinted in the *Middle East Journal* (Winter, 1966).

begged Faisal to "save the prestige of the Egyptian Army" and in August agreed at Jidda to withdraw his troops from Yemen.<sup>10</sup> But between the Jidda Conference and the Haradh Conference of representatives of the Yemeni Royalists and Republicans in November, Nasser sojourned in the Soviet Union, and at this time the Soviets attempted to negate the Jidda Agreement by offering the Egyptian leader vast supplies of military equipment if he would just persist in the Yemen.<sup>11</sup> Nasser, ever the opportunist, accepted the offer and with the new equipment tried to regain the offensive in early 1966. But this time Faisal more than matched the Egyptians, and the consequence was a series of Royalist victories that forced the hard-pressed Egyptians to adopt a defensive enclave strategy designed to secure only the triangle formed by the three cities of Hodeidah, San'a and Ta'izz. This was the precarious position in which the Egyptians found themselves in the spring of 1967, when the outcome of the June War with Israel suddenly changed the Middle East context in which the Yemen War was being fought.

It should be noted that Faisal's military response to the collapse of the Jidda Agreement coincided with the ideological response described earlier. With the coincidence of Faisal's proposal for an Islamic entente and the actual escalation of the military conflict, the politics of the Arab state system reached their most intense point in 1966. Nasser was simply becoming too deeply involved in the Yemen for Saudi Arabia not to question its earlier containment policy, and consequently Saudi Arabia showed the first (and only) signs of taking the offensive to roll back Arab radicalism in the Yemen.

The apparent change in Saudi Arabian policy from one of containment to one of outright defeat of the Egyptian forces cannot be explained fully in terms of Egypt's renewed assault, for Faisal might have countered in his normal low-key style and simply matched the Egyptians. That Faisal did more than react, that he initiated a mild Islamic crusade and, in addition, invested enough support in the Yemen to drive Egypt's nearly 70,000 troops back toward the Red Sea — all of this suggests Saudi Arabia felt a breaking point had been reached. Why? The explanation lies

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<sup>10</sup> Stanko Guldescu, "Yemen: The War and the Haradh Conference," *The Review of Politics* (July, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



partly in the nature of developing Saudi Arabian society. Increasingly, in the 1960's, as Saudi Arabia's economy industrializes, its society has been characterized by a sedentary, urban industrial class that is vulnerable to Nasserist propaganda and liable to revolt. Faisal might be able to tolerate a weak radical Arab state on his border (because he could isolate it), but he cannot tolerate a powerful Egyptian satellite that could become a sanctuary for Saudi Arabian political malcontents, organized as some type of "National Liberation Front." Until 1966, the Yemen appeared to be Egypt's South Vietnam, a bottomless quagmire into which Nasser was futilely pouring his military power. The danger in 1966 was that the tables would be turned and the Yemen would become Saudi Arabia's North Vietnam, a haven and inspiration for Saudi Arabian radicals. This prospect along with other considerations constrained Faisal to act decisively before Nasser consolidated his position.

Nonetheless, Faisal's failure to press to the full his advantage in Yemen suggests that Saudi Arabia's deviation from its basic balance of power policy was only a temporary response to an uncertain situation. But what would have happened if, at Khartoum, Nasser had failed to agree to withdraw his forces? Would Faisal then have been able to deny the Royalists the aid they needed for a victory that would secure a Saudi Arabian vassal state in Yemen? The answers to these questions are suggested by the aftermath of the Egyptian withdrawal. The *quid pro quo* for the removal of the Egyptian forces was the cessation of Saudi Arabian support for the Royalists, which enhanced the Republic's prospects for survival. Faisal complied, evidently because he did not fear a weak Republican state which he knew he could contain, if not control. At this point, however, the situation grew confused, mainly as a consequence of developments in South Yemen.<sup>12</sup> While negotiating the Egyptian withdrawal in 1967, Faisal was simultaneously negotiating with the British to get them to maintain their presence in Aden and the remainder of South Yemen.<sup>13</sup> Faisal succeeded in persuading the Labour Government to extend the British stay, but as a consequence of the continuing deterioration of the pound, London's commitment soon dissolved and Great

<sup>12</sup> See *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> See Aaron S. Klieman, "Bab al-Mandab: The Red Sea in Transition," *Orbis* (Fall, 1967).

Britain left South Yemen abruptly and prematurely in November, 1967.

The timing was noteworthy, for Egyptian and British withdrawals, one encouraged and the other discouraged by Saudi Arabia, were simultaneously creating power vacuums on both Arabian sides of the strategically important entrance to the Red Sea, the Bab al Mandab. Instead of passing on power to FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of South Yemen), which had close ties with the Yemeni Republicans and with Egypt, the British transferred authority to the NLF (National Liberation Front), which at that time appeared to be the more independent of the two organizations. But South Yemen's miserable financial circumstances soon constrained the governing NLF to seek outside aid, and it found the most favorable reception in Moscow.<sup>14</sup> The Soviets, who with Egypt's withdrawal were becoming the major source of outside support for Yemen, have since become the major outside support for South Yemen as well, and the Saudi Arabians find the prospect of a widespread Soviet presence in southern Arabia no less disquieting than the Egyptian presence.

The contradiction in Soviet policy which is open to exploitation by Saudi Arabia is that the Soviets are supporting two states moving toward conflict with each other.<sup>15</sup> Yemen, which traditionally has been an economic hinterland of South Yemen and has long coveted a port facility comparable in quality to Aden, has an expansionist policy toward its neighbor. Toward the support of this policy Saudi Arabia has been shifting. Toward the end of 1968 the Saudi Arabians took advantage of a widening split in the Royalist opposition to the Yemeni Republican Government by channeling all of their aid to the faction led by the former Imam, Mohammed al Badr, because he alone among the Royalist leaders wished to pursue a compromise settlement with the Republicans.<sup>16</sup> The symbolic portent of this act was not missed in San'a. Sub-

<sup>14</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 10, May 12, and Sept. 22, 1968.

<sup>15</sup> For excellent background material on the border conflicts of Yemen and South Yemen, see Gillian King, *Imperial Outpost — Aden: Its Place in British Strategic Policy* (London, 1964), pp. 79-90. In November, 1968, Yemen's first National Assembly held its first meeting and reserved 12 of 57 seats for South Yemen, despite South Yemen's protests. *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1968. In April, 1969, Premier al-Shaabi of South Yemen charged that Saudi Arabia was continuing to support armed incursions into South Yemen and was doing this in collusion with Yemen. *Ibid.*, April 14, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1968.

sequently the Yemeni Republicans indicated that they desired a reconciliation with Saudi Arabia.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere sporadic fighting between the tribes of the South Yemeni hinterland and the South Yemeni Government forces broke out.<sup>18</sup> The South Yemeni forces even clashed with Mohammed al Badr's Yemeni Royalists near Beihan. In sum, Faisal was seeking to effect a reconciliation of the contending factions in Yemen to gather allies against what he perceived to be a more threatening situation in South Yemen. Meanwhile, the Soviets have been gaining more influence in South Yemen than in Yemen. Indeed, Yemen may be developing its own balance of power policy, one in which it neutralizes Soviet influence in the country by affording Saudi Arabia equal access and influence.

Faisal's evolving policy toward South Yemen is substantially no different from his earlier policy toward Yemen. For political as well as the social reasons described earlier, Saudi Arabia's policy aim is to deny any outside power access to the southern and eastern Arabian littoral. If Saudi Arabia holds true to form, it will invest enough aid in efforts to subvert South Yemen to make the Soviets feel it more expedient to withdraw than to remain. The danger is that the Soviets may invest forces in South Yemen as the Egyptians did in Yemen in 1962, and it is unlikely that the Soviet military establishment would be as inefficient as the Egyptian.

Faisal is not one to forget the shaping aim of his policy and it is, therefore, doubtful that he will take initiatives that could cause further Soviet investment in South Yemen. More likely, Faisal will carefully react to the initiatives of the outsider by matching whatever he invests to attain a stalemate that will induce the outsider to withdraw. It is also unlikely that the Soviets will repeat the series of greedy blunders that resulted in such a heavy Egyptian investment in the Yemen. The strong probability is that South Yemeni hostilities will continue at a low level, but one which exacts from the Soviets a high price for the maintenance of a naval presence at Aden that is undoubtedly their major aim.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, March 23, 1969.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, July 29, Aug. 5, Sept. 5, Sept. 22, and Dec. 3, 1968, as well as April 14, 1969, for reports with varying degrees of credibility of the fighting in the South Yemeni hinterland. See also *ibid.*, March 18, 1968, for a report on South Yemeni Royalist exiles being housed in Jidda by Saudi Arabia.

<sup>19</sup> For stimulating discussions of changing Soviet policy aims in the Middle East, see Walter Laqueur, "Russia Enters the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*

problem that Faisal will have to face is that the Soviets may be willing to pay that price in the form of considerable indirect aid to the South Yemeni regime in return for the very valuable port facility. Faisal may learn to live with such a situation. Or Saudi Arabia may find itself pressured by its major ally, the United States, to invest heavily in South Yemen to prevent the Soviet Union from consolidating its position.

The two Yemeni conflicts demonstrate the extent to which Saudi Arabia in the regional context of the Arab state system has acted the part of the conservative great power maintaining the regional system's equilibrium through a policy of containment. It must be remembered, however, that the pincer of revolutionary Arab nationalism that moves down the Red Sea and through southern Arabia *en route* to the Persian Gulf is, from Saudi Arabia's perspective, only one of two pincers emanating from Cairo. The other projects through the Fertile Crescent *via* Jordan, Syria and Iraq *en route* to the same Persian Gulf. Here Saudi Arabia has never invested herself as consistently or forcibly as she has in southern Arabia from 1962 to the present. The reason for this is plain: no matter how radical the Arab states of the Fertile Crescent may become, Saudi Arabia can depend upon their apparent ideological unity being undercut and neutralized by the age-old antagonism of the Nile and Mesopotamian valley power centers. In effect, there is a persistent balance of power between Egypt and Iraq which helps to neutralize any radical threat from the Fertile Crescent.

The Saudi Arabian reaction to the Syrian crisis of 1957 provides the point of departure for Saudi Arabia's transition from a country with an inconsistent and erratic foreign policy to a modern state with a systematically conservative foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> As with most major transitions, this one began awkwardly, not only because of uncertainty in fluid circumstances that challenged long-standing assumptions and traditions, but also because of the failure of King Saud's leadership.

Prior to 1957 Saudi Arabia had been an ally of Egypt; in

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(January, 1968), as well as a lengthy feature article by Hanson W. Baldwin on developing Soviet policy toward Arabia in *New York Times*, March 3, 1969.

<sup>20</sup> For excellent background material, see Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria, A Study in Postwar Arab Politics, 1945-1958* (London, 1965); Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War, 1958-1964* (London, 1965); and Leonard Binder, "The Tragedy of Syria," *World Politics* (April, 1967).

1955 the two countries signed an agreement whereby their command staffs were integrated, with an Egyptian placed in overall charge. Emotional rather than strategic considerations explain the alliance. King Saud made the pact and backed Egypt through the turbulent events of 1955 and 1956, less because he felt a threat from Israel than because he sympathized with the young Colonel Nasser's nationalism and the growing challenge it presented to the West and to the Hashimite Dynasties of Iraq and Jordan. To the Arab world Nasser then appeared to embody the highest Arab ideals. He was a modernizing nationalist who was independently taking on the West and its advance agents, Israel and Iraq, and as the Suez crisis of 1956 demonstrated to Arabs, he was doing so with success.

The Syrian crisis of 1957 and the subsequent creation of the first United Arab Republic (UAR) in early 1958 prompted a sharp change in Saudi Arabian foreign policy. In 1957 King Saud abruptly terminated the alliance with Egypt and entered into an alliance with the United States. Simultaneously, he launched a vitriolic propaganda campaign against the Egyptians and, according to Egyptian sources, attempted to bribe the chief of the Syrian general staff to assassinate Nasser.<sup>21</sup> In all, King Saud poured out millions of dollars worth of gold in an emotional reaction to Nasser's expansionism.

It was a badly bungled attempt to counter Nasser's first expansion into the Fertile Crescent and, although King Saud did manifest in his overreaction the first indication that Saudi Arabia might replace Iraq as the leader of the conservative Arab forces, he also demonstrated his inability to conduct a skilled foreign policy. Consequently, in 1958, Crown Prince Faisal openly took the reins of government into his hands. Faisal's more restrained behavior from 1958 to 1962 deceived some into believing that he was friendly toward Nasser and had replaced his brother for this reason.<sup>22</sup> An interpretation better borne out by subsequent events is that Saud and Faisal were both conservative, but Saud's propensity for making emotional decisions and his clumsiness in politics necessarily gave way to Faisal's rational decision-making in terms of the *raison d'état* of Saudi Arabia and his demonstrated skill in

<sup>21</sup> David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (London, 1966), pp. 120-121.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen H. Longrigg, "New Groupings Among the Arab States," *International Affairs* (London, July, 1968).

the tactics of statecraft. Faisal may well have agreed with Saud that Egypt's expansion into the Fertile Crescent posed a threat to Saudi Arabia. But he did not think it significant enough to call forth the former monarch's gross response.

Faisal reacted to Egypt's apparent expansionism without the emotionalism shown by King Saud or John Foster Dulles in 1957, because he recognized that the first UAR was weak, poorly organized and absorbed in simply maintaining itself. In addition, the radicalism which apparently united the UAR and Iraq after 1958 was deeply undercut not only by the traditional competition of the Nile and Mesopotamian states over the rich area between them but also by the fact that Kassem's radicalism was as different from Nasser's as Maoism is from the ideology of the Kremlin. In the Fertile Crescent Iraq and Egypt could be depended upon to remain in conflict; and this meant that Saudi Arabia could rest, for a few more years at least, in isolation from that focal point of activities in the Arab state system.

The 1961 Kuwait crisis demonstrates that from 1958 to 1962 Faisal was successfully exploiting the balance of divided radical Arab power in the Fertile Crescent. This was the only time the radical General Kassem turned Iraq's energies from a westward to an eastward direction, presenting a direct threat to a small Saudi Arabian border state. It was the only time in this period that Saudi Arabia and Egypt cooperated — to counter Iraq's expansionism.<sup>23</sup> In essence, Kuwait's situation today is not different from 1961, although the threats to the oil-rich sheikdom have changed. Presently, the major threat to Kuwait is an internal uprising of a population largely Palestinian and sympathetic to Nasser's propaganda. But, reasoning from historical analogy, one might expect Baathist Iraq to remain unsympathetic to any Nasser-sponsored uprising, in which case Kuwait's radicals would find themselves isolated between hostile Saudi Arabia and Iran. If, on the other hand, Iraq's Baathists were to initiate a new threat to Kuwait, one might reasonably expect Egypt to be neutral or hostile, as she was in 1961. The advantage for Saudi Arabia is that Kuwait is one of the great stakes of Arab politics, and simply because it is worth so much, the Iraqis and the Egyptians cannot allow one or the other to gain control of it and neither can they unite to

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<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Monroe, "Kuwait and Aden, A Contrast in British Policies," *Middle East Journal* (Winter, 1964).

control it. Because Kuwait's value is so well understood in Arab politics, all states, revolutionary as well as conservative, tacitly but willingly support the *status quo*.

The only development in the Fertile Crescent which might threaten Saudi Arabia to the extent that Egypt's intervention in the Yemen did is the destruction of the balance of power between the Nile and the Mesopotamian political centers. This would occur if Iraq gained control of Egypt, which is nearly inconceivable, or if Egypt gained control of Iraq, which is also highly unlikely. Either country would first have to gain control of the intervening states of the Fertile Crescent — Jordan and Syria — a move which, in Egypt's more likely case, would raise powerful opposition, not only from the states involved and Iraq but also from Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Of the three Arab states in the Fertile Crescent, Lebanon is strategically inconsequential, and Syria — although long considered the decisive stake of Arab politics — does not border on Saudi Arabia. Consequently, its take-over by Egypt or Iraq, unlikely in all but the most abnormal circumstances, would not immediately affect Saudi Arabia. Only Jordan could present a major immediate problem for Saudi Arabian foreign policy. Therefore, the Saudi Arabian interest in maintaining Hashimite Jordan independent of potentially threatening forces (the Israelis or al-Fatah) has served to submerge the old dynastic quarrels between the Hashimite and Saudi Houses. The key question this interest poses for Saudi Arabia is whether and how to intervene, if Hussein's rule should collapse and the Jordanian state be taken over by the Israelis or al-Fatah.

An Israeli take-over of Jordan would create an entirely new type of problem for Saudi Arabia. Of all the major Arab states, only Tunisia has been less involved than Saudi Arabia in the Arab-Israeli dispute. King Abdul Aziz was known to have complained during World War II and again in 1945, at his Bitter Lakes meeting with President Roosevelt, about developing western policy toward Palestine. King Saud gave some support to the Arab side in the 1950's, but it was never enough to make Saudi Arabia a major factor in the conflict with Israel. Faisal has not broken this pattern. Indeed, verbally he is less hostile toward Israel than the recently deceased Saud was, and materially the only significant support King Faisal gave to the Arab cause came *after* the June,

1967, War, when it could do no harm to Israel.<sup>24</sup> At Khartoum in August, 1967, Faisal agreed to pay a subsidy to Jordan (which in any case was in the Saudi Arabian interest) and to Egypt. The stated reason for the subsidy to Egypt was to make up temporarily Egypt's loss of revenue from the closing of the Suez Canal, but the unstated and real reason was to induce Egypt to stop opposing shipments of Arab oil to the West, since it was from this source that the huge subsidy would have to come. In addition, Saudi Arabia has stationed 3,000 troops in Jordan, but these have been kept in the south far from the feverish front around Jerusalem. All of these moves serve not to intensify the Arab-Israeli conflict but rather to bolster a weak Jordan. A border with Israel as a consequence of the collapse of Jordan would involve Saudi Arabia directly in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and there is no reason to think that Faisal desires such a circumstance. Saudi Arabia thus has good reason for extending to Jordan the largest amount of support it can afford.

In the near future a take-over of Jordan by al-Fatah is a stronger probability and it is undoubtedly this prospect that recently prompted Faisal to urge that the West give greater support to Hussein's Jordan.<sup>25</sup> Possibly Faisal would respond by supporting a Hashimite Royalist countermovement operating from a Saudi Arabian sanctuary. But, whereas in Yemen a similar operation looked like a conventional Arab conflict between conservatives and radicals, a Jordanian struggle would appear to align Saudi Arabia with Israel against the great Arab cause. Public opinion in Saudi Arabia is sensitive to the Palestine issue, and Faisal could expect to have internal problems as a consequence of a foreign policy action that seemed to have as its by-product support for Israel and harm for the Arab cause. Therefore, in the event of a take-over of

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<sup>24</sup> In the context of the Saudi Arabian-Egyptian contest, Saudi Arabian policy in the Summer of 1966 was to withdraw its financial support from all inter-Arab organizations. Even prior to 1966 Faisal had been holding back on Saudi Arabian financial support to anti-Israel programs. Saudi Arabia contributed only \$20 million as against Egypt's \$48 million to the Palestine Liberation Organization, the United Arab Command and the project to divert the Jordan's waters. See D. C. Watt, "The Postponement of the Arab Summit," *World Today* (September, 1968). Reliable sources report that Faisal, a very religious man, is deeply stirred by the loss of Jerusalem to Israel. His call for a Holy War and other emotional remarks just before and during the Arab summit of August, 1969, attest to this, but it is to be doubted that Faisal will allow these sentiments to shape his actions to any significant extent.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times*, May 23, 1968.



Jordan by the radical Arabs, Faisal might well choose the easy way out and adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality toward Jordan.

Another weighty deterrent to Saudi Arabia's intervention is the probability that a radical Jordan would present no immediate threat to Saudi Arabia. Jordanian radicals, in contrast to Kuwait's or Yemen's, are radical less for internal political reasons than from frustration with the Israeli problem, and consequently one could expect that their energies would be absorbed not in spreading their revolution eastward into Saudi Arabia but rather in consolidating their Jordanian base for a new onslaught on Israel. Furthermore, a take-over of Jordan by radical Arabs is not as odious to Saudi Arabia as a take-over by the Egyptians. If the southern Arabian conflicts demonstrated nothing else, they showed that Saudi Arabia is opposed not so much to internal Arab radicalism as to the foreign intervention that supports or, as in Yemen's case, actually replaces that radicalism. Just as Saudi Arabia may learn to live with a small Soviet naval presence in South Yemen as long as it directs itself eastward toward competition with the United States presence in the Indian Ocean, so too she might learn to tolerate a radical Arab presence in Jordan that directs itself westward toward Israel.

To the question, why Saudi Arabia pursues tactically diverse but strategically coordinated balance of power policies in southern Arabia and the Fertile Crescent, one must look for an answer to the Persian Gulf or, more specifically, to its oil, for it is this vital national resource as well as the Saudi Arabian state that Saudi Arabian foreign policy defends, and it is in the Gulf area that she discards a balance of power policy and pursues instead something akin to an imperial policy. Saudi Arabia's near-hegemonial position on the southern shore of the Gulf is not without problems. Two outside powers, Great Britain and Iran, are also involved on the southern shore of the Gulf, and Saudi Arabia must deal with both if she is to attain an uncontested sphere of influence in the area.

The conflict with Great Britain is presently dormant, but it was not in the 1950's and may not be in the 1970's.<sup>26</sup> By treaty Britain now affords imperial protection to the sheikdoms of the Trucial Coast and to the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. This

<sup>26</sup> The writings of J. B. Kelly are indispensable for an understanding of the political problems of eastern Arabia. Above all, see *Eastern Arabian Frontiers* (New York, 1964), and "Sovereignty and Jurisdiction in Eastern Arabia," *International Affairs* (London; January, 1968).

raised no significant problems with Saudi Arabia until the prospect of oil in the undefined hinterland of the small coastal states led Saudi Arabia in 1949 to lay claim to much of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Muscat and Oman. The claim centered on the Buraimi Oasis [Qatar]. In the middle 1950's, after protracted negotiations had proved futile, the conflict came to open military engagements between the British-backed coastal states and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia retreated and in the 1960's allowed the border claims to lie dormant. In 1968, however, Britain announced that she was planning to terminate her imperial presence by 1971. The problem, therefore, may be expected to recur in the early 1970's.

Saudi Arabia's incentive for expanding her control over all of the coastal sheikdoms and Muscat and Oman is not simply imperial lust. The coastal states present a potential power vacuum which has already attracted the radical Arabs in South Yemen<sup>27</sup> and, to a lesser extent, in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> These outside threats from the south and north may provide Saudi Arabia with the pretext for acting toward the small states of the southern shore of the Gulf much more imperialistically in the 1970's than she did in the 1950's.

The other power active on the southern shore of the Persian Gulf is Iran, which was stimulated to renew a dormant claim to the Bahrain Islands when the British announced their intention to withdraw from the Gulf. At present, however, the Shah is apparently unwilling or unable to act on this claim, and consequently a heated conflict with Saudi Arabia has been avoided. Bahrain is so integral a part of the Saudi Arabian oil economy that it is difficult to believe the Shah is seriously planning to pursue his claims to the islands. Most likely the Shah's claim amounts to an extreme bargaining position and has been kept alive to be traded in later for a compromise package that would probably include increased Iranian drilling rights in the offshore oil reserves of the Gulf.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In 1968 the Front for the Liberation of Dhofar (Dhofar is the southern province of Muscat and Oman) changed its name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf but it continues to operate from Aden. It is unknown whether it receives support from the South Yemen government. See *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1968, Jan. 13, Feb. 9, and May 28, 1969.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1969.

<sup>29</sup> There is no clear proof that this is one of the Shah's aims, but logic suggests it. The offshore boundaries in the Persian Gulf are still to a great extent undefined, and on, at least, one occasion Saudi Arabia and Iran came into conflict because ARAMCO was drilling in an area Iran considered to be

The likely outcome of the fluid political situation in the Gulf is that Bahrain, Qatar, the Trucial states and possibly Muscat and Oman will retain the symbols of independence while Saudi Arabia succeeds Britain as their imperial protector. The rulers of Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial states, although engaged in forming a Gulf Federation, have shown no opposition to this likely outcome, and Saudi Arabia has demonstrated her willingness to accept a sphere of influence rather than direct imperial control by openly supporting the Gulf Federation.<sup>30</sup> Mainly because of its ossified political system, Muscat and Oman presents a different type of political problem from that of the Trucial sheikhdoms, but internal revolution in the Sultanate may result in even more direct Saudi Arabian intervention and control than that exercised over the Trucial states.

## II

The role and importance of Saudi Arabia in world politics is best understood as a function of her role at the regional level: she contributes more than any other state toward maintaining a balance of power in the subordinate Arab state system, and to the extent that the global balance of power is a consequence not only of the strategic nuclear balance between the United States and the Soviet Union but also of subnuclear regional balances and complementary imbalances in the Eurasian rimland regions of Europe, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia and the Far East, the Saudi Arabians are playing a constructive role.

From this perspective the quality of the militarily small Saudi Arabian contribution comes into sharper focus, especially when it is compared to that of key United States allies in other Eurasian rimland regions. In South and Southeast Asia there is no United States ally that can or will maintain a regional balance of power that supports and reflects the global balance. The United States has been compelled to intervene massively in Southeast Asia to maintain what it rightly or wrongly perceived to be a threat to the Asian and global balances, and it has felt constrained to intervene substantially with economic means to sustain the decaying

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within its jurisdiction. See *Petroleum Press Service* (March, 1968), "Tension in the Gulf." On Iran's renewal of its claim to Bahrain, see the *Economist* (Feb. 10, 1968), the *Middle East Journal* (Summer, 1968), pp. 328-329, and *New York Times*, Jan. 10, Feb. 10, and May 23, 1968.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 2, May 23, 1968.

Indian state in South Asia. In East Asia and in Europe the United States has been more fortunate, with stable and prosperous regional allies in Japan, Germany, Britain and France. Nonetheless, Japan has never made a contribution toward maintaining the political and military balance in Asia that is equal to her economic capability, Germany persistently pursues a foreign policy toward the East which is out of harmony with United States interests, Britain has been playing an increasingly weaker role over the past decade, and France has come as close as she could to breaking off alliance collaboration with the United States. Undoubtedly Saudi Arabia makes a smaller quantitative contribution to the maintenance of the global balance of power, but qualitatively her contribution is peerless. Only Saudi Arabia has performed in a way which supports United States' interests while simultaneously demanding little of this country. Her basic political relation with the United States reflects a remarkable harmony of interests between patron and client state in the separate but coordinated global and regional state systems.

In addition to Saudi Arabia's strategic role, her importance from the perspective of global politics is economic: 60 per cent of the world's known oil reserves are located in the area of the Persian Gulf, and Saudi Arabia has been one of the two largest (the other being Kuwait) and politically the most reliable of the Persian Gulf suppliers to the West. The importance of the profits earned by American firms and the tax revenues gained by the United States government is far overshadowed by the role Saudi Arabian oil plays in fueling the economy of Western Europe.

The place of oil in Saudi Arabian foreign policy — past, present and future — cannot be described with precision because so little is known about the government's relations with ARAMCO, the American consortium exploiting the Saudi Arabian concession.<sup>31</sup> The broader picture that can be seen reveals a complex mixture of advantages and disadvantages for Saudi Arabian foreign policy. As might be imagined, the advantages have, up to the present,

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<sup>31</sup> The literature on oil and international politics is extensive, but two books stand out: David Hirst, *Oil and Public Opinion in the Middle East* (New York, 1966); and J. E. Hartshorne, *Oil Companies and Government* (London, 1962). See, also, Stephen Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East* (3rd ed.: New York, 1968); K. S. Twitchell, *op. cit.*, and Edith T. Penrose, *The Large International Firm in Developing Countries: The International Petroleum Industry* (London, 1968).

outweighed the disadvantages, but this may not continue to be the case.

For the Saudi Arabian government the least of the disadvantages of the ARAMCO oil operation is the grist it provides for the propaganda mills of the radical Arab governments. At various times Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad have attacked ARAMCO as an oppressor of labor with peers only in Alabama. At higher political levels, the radical Arabs claimed ARAMCO consistently gave King Saud financial support in his war of nerves with President Nasser, but later supported Faisal's rise to power when it became apparent that Saud was a political incompetent.<sup>32</sup> ARAMCO is also American, which, for the radical Arabs, means that it is implicated in the Zionist conspiracy, that is, Israel. This apparently rich point is not much exploited, however, since it is also widely known that the western oil companies operating in Arab countries have meticulously avoided supplying Israel. Iran is the main source of Israeli oil.

A second disadvantage of ARAMCO's presence in Saudi Arabia is certainly more significant for the government than the propaganda barrages of the radical Arabs. As an instrument of social change, ARAMCO not only has brought thousands of Saudi Arabians out of illiteracy but also has given them technical skills and a changed attitude that leads them to expect more of life. The social consequence has been the creation of a new working class which, like the oil classes in Kuwait and Bahrain, is vulnerable to radical Arab ideas and propaganda. In addition, ARAMCO's operations have helped to create a wealthy urban middle class that is out of touch with the tradition-bound, communal and puritanical society of non-urban Saudi Arabia. In fairness to ARAMCO, however, it must be said that its labor policy and its public relations effort have been consistently constructive toward easing the transition from traditional to modern ways of living. Nonetheless, in spite of the best efforts of ARAMCO, the government is beset with growing social problems.

These disadvantages pale to insignificance when they are contrasted with the advantage to Saudi Arabia of ARAMCO's presence. Each year since World War II, Saudi Arabia has earned tens and later hundreds of millions of dollars as a result of ARAMCO's operations. With this money Saudi Arabia has

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<sup>32</sup> Hirst, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

equipped her desert armies, built a modern air force and the nucleus of a coast guard, subverted governments and policies of the radical Arabs, supported useful governments such as Hussein's and, perhaps most important, financed the Yemen War.

The financial relations between the Saudi Arabian government and ARAMCO are not always smooth, and there is no reason to believe that rougher relations may lie ahead unless steps are taken to change the basic structure of the relationship. The problem is that the changed nature of the partners has not been reflected in alterations of their contract. The original oil concession was signed by a financially pressed monarch and a consortium of American oil companies. There may have been nothing irregular in the balance struck between the dynastic and private interests of King Abdul Aziz and ARAMCO in the 1933 concession agreement, but that balance of narrow interests was being replaced in the 1960's by an imbalance between the continued narrow, private interests of ARAMCO and the ever broader national interest of an emerging nation-state of seven million persons. The reaction of ARAMCO to this change has been to focus attention on the sanctity of the original contract, whereas the Saudi Arabian government has tended to make greater demands for increased prices so that government revenues will increase.

The psychic dimension of the situation must be appreciated, if one is to understand the political problem. As in so many developing countries, Saudi Arabia's economy is basically "single-crop"; and like so many other raw materials from less developed countries, oil is facing a glutted market and an unfavorable price trend resulting in a deterioration in Saudi Arabia's terms of trade. There is also fear that Saudi Arabia's raw material may someday be replaced by nuclear energy, natural gas, Alaskan oil or cheap United States coal.<sup>33</sup> Since Saudi Arabia's expanding economic development effort is fully hinged to the revenues derived from oil, Saudi Arabian officials sometimes appear to western eyes a bit paranoid about the oil industry. But their anxiety does not seem unreasonable, when one reflects that ARAMCO's decisions on production and prices affect the vital national interests of Saudi Arabia quite as emphatically as Nasser's decisions in the Yemen did. ARAMCO produces 95 per cent of the oil produced in Saudi Arabia, and this provides 85 per cent of the government's reve-

<sup>33</sup> See *Petroleum Press Service* (March, 1967), "Oil's Rivals in Europe."

nues.<sup>34</sup> Few other developing countries are so lopsidedly dependent on a single raw material.

One conceivable solution is an international commodity agreement between the involved governments and firms. The consumer countries would guarantee to purchase a given amount of oil at a minimum price, and the supplier countries would agree to sell a certain amount of oil at a guaranteed maximum price. The problem with oil, however, is that the market does not fluctuate from glut to scarcity but rather remains consistently glutted. There is thus little incentive for the consumer countries to enter into a commodities agreement. Furthermore, if several producer countries were included in the agreement, the problem of rationing would arise, and although Saudi Arabia and Kuwait might agree to rationing based on an average of recent yearly percentages of world production, countries like Iran and newcomer Libya most certainly would not. Finally, if the experiences of the analogous tin and wheat agreements have anything to say about the prospects for the successful implementation of an oil agreement, then one would have to be pessimistic. Commodities agreements have always looked attractive in theory, but the practical problems have proven insurmountable.

An alternative route which might ease and eventually even solve the problem would be to include Saudi Arabia in the most private decision-making processes of ARAMCO — those involving production and posted prices. These two areas have long been the most carefully guarded preserves of international oil companies. They also have given rise to the greatest fears on the part of the governments in oil-producing states. Yet, if the oil companies are honest in their operations, they should have nothing to fear from Saudi Arabian participation, which would preclude charges of “smuggling” and other dubious business practices such as those elaborated in the 1960 argument of the Saudi Arabian Minister of Oil, Sheik Abdullah Tariki.<sup>35</sup> If downstream production costs (shipping, piping, marketing and management) really are rising, as ARAMCO often complains, then the Saudi Arabians ought to be allowed to feel this by participating in the company’s vital decision-making processes.

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<sup>34</sup> *Petroleum Press Service* (May, 1969).

<sup>35</sup> For a brief presentation of the Tariki argument, see Hartshorne, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24, 140-142.

The easiest way for Saudi Arabia to participate is to buy into ARAMCO, eventually to the point where the government holds the controlling interest. Recent agreements for oil exploration (in the Red Sea and inland concession areas relinquished<sup>36</sup> by ARAMCO) between Petronim, the Saudi Arabian state oil and minerals agency, and AUXERUP (France), ENI (Italy), and Continental (USA), provide that the foreign company will make the initial outlay of capital but that Petronim has the right to participate after discovery of oil.<sup>37</sup> In almost all cases Petronim's participation is scheduled to be small if the find is small, but to grow by stages to 50 per cent, if and as the find grows. The idea is to allow western capital to bear the initial risk and to enjoy the initial profits and to include the government or its agents as a partner only as the exploitation grows substantially. From the perspective of private capital, the process is as simple as taking in a new partner. Indeed, for some private firms the arrangement would be a welcome one, for Saudi Arabia would have to help capitalize expanding operations. From the perspective of the national interest, the Saudi Arabian government will participate sufficiently so that the major decisions affecting the state could not be taken without the government's concurrence. In theory, it sounds like an admirable harmonization of private and public interests. Only experience will tell how it works out.

Petronim has expressed interest in concluding a similar agreement with ARAMCO. So far no detailed arrangements have been worked out. The problem with ARAMCO is that it is already established and working with an agreement that it considers sacred. This puts the Saudi Arabian government at a relative bargaining disadvantage. Nonetheless, ARAMCO might do well to recall the wisdom of its pathbreaking decision to share profits evenly with the Saudi Arabian government. That farsighted policy initiated a long period of excellent relations between the public and private partners. ARAMCO might wisely conclude at the present juncture that half a nationalization undertaken now by formal agreement

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<sup>36</sup> In March, 1969, ARAMCO relinquished 20,000 sq. miles of its concession area, which now covers 105,000 sq. miles. Future relinquishments will reduce the area by 1996 to 20,000 sq. miles, or less than 3 per cent of the 672,864 sq. miles once held by the company. *Petroleum Press Service* (May, 1969), "Saudi Arabia Diversifies."

<sup>37</sup> *Idem* as well as *ibid.* (May, 1965 and Jan., 1968) for complete details of the agreements.



is better than full nationalization undertaken later by the unilateral decision of the Saudi Arabian government.

### III

To sum up, this article has considered Saudi Arabia in international politics from two perspectives, one corresponding to the regional Arab state system, the other to the related dimension of global politics. On the regional level Saudi Arabia has come of age as a state and taken up the role of a conservative great power in the Arab state system. Her performance at the regional level underscores her contribution to global politics. Her maintenance of a balance of power in one of several regional subordinate state systems that string themselves loosely around the southern half of the Eurasian landmass renders Saudi Arabia a most important client state of the United States. Finally, Saudi Arabian oil is essential to Western Europe's security and well-being and, more importantly for the West, to Saudi Arabia's continued economic development and political stability.

Finally, it would seem altogether appropriate to conclude a paper of this scope with a word on Arab political fortunes. More than five decades ago, Colonel T. E. Lawrence hoped and fought passionately to make the Arab revolt culminate in an Arab state under the kingship of the Emir Faisal, son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca. Lawrence failed, not only because the individualistic Arab tribes provided difficult material to mold into the political oneness that is a state, but also because Emir Faisal and his brother lacked the stuff of high quality leadership.<sup>38</sup> One can only speculate on what might have happened had a man with Lawrence's connections to the vast imperial power of Great Britain combined with a Prince who manifested the Machiavellian leadership qualities of Abdul Aziz. Perhaps the dream of the Arab revolt culminating

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence acknowledges the leadership problem all through Book One of *Seven Pillars*. He described the area then controlled by Abdul Aziz as the "true center of Arabia, the preserve of its native spirit, and its most conscious individuality. The desert lapped it round and kept it pure of contact" (p. 34). Lawrence also acknowledged that the Arab revolt would have done better had it proceeded from Mesopotamia rather than from the Nile (p. 60). Nonetheless, "the British in Mesopotamia remained substantially an alien force invading enemy territory," and this was mainly because they failed to cultivate Arab leadership in the region as Allenby had done in the Hejaz (pp. 59-60). T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Garden City, 1936).

in a unified Arab Empire encompassing Damascus, Amman and Baghdad as well as Mecca, Medina and Riyadh would have been realized.

Nonetheless, the past is so much spilt milk, not to be wept over because in the long run history has its own poetic justice. Today the Hashimites who appeared so promising in 1918 and so fortunate in 1921 but so unworthy in the crucial period between, have been reduced to one brave young king in Jordan, the first member of his family capable of ruling as well as reigning. Concurrently, the House of Saud, whose emerging state appeared wild and backward in the period before World War II, has in the 1960's become the chief defender of the conservative faith and the skilled manipulator of the balance of power in a distraught Arab world. Even if on a partial basis, Lawrence's dream of a great Arab kingdom is being realized in the state of Saudi Arabia.