

Prospectus

To what extent did the U.S. - K.S.A. relationship change between 9/11 and the Second Gulf War?

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Introduction

The September 11th attacks in 2001 shocked America and the world. The way the United States viewed and acted towards the Muslim World was severely impacted. Before 2001, while there had undeniably been conflicts and tensions between the United States and the Middle East, this was the largest-scale attack against American soil.

In response to these attacks, the Bush Administration took many actions. War was almost immediately declared, (albeit initially in Afghanistan and not the Middle East), new domestic policies, like the Patriot Act, were implemented, and the War on Terror began.

Additionally, Congress requested information on how the attack happened and the details (nationality, terrorists affiliations, funding, among others) of the attackers¹. This Congressional Inquiry, however, was classified and a number of American politicians (as well as other members of the public) believed that there were links to the Saudi government within these reports². Some like former senator, Bob Graham, believed it was classified to protect U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia and a relationship that was tender after the September 11th attacks³. Others, especially those within the U.S. government, rose to the defense of Saudi Arabia⁴ claiming that they were vital to strategic and counter-terrorist efforts in the region.

¹ "28 Pages of the 2002 Congressional Inquiry into the Sept. 11 Attacks," *The New York Times*, published July 15, 2016, accessed September 11, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/15/us/document-september-11-28-pages.html>

² "FAQ," 28Pages.org, accessed September 19, 2016. <http://www.28pages.org>

³ Steve Kroft, "28 Pages," *60 Minutes*, updated April 10, 2016. Accessed September 19, 2016.

⁴ Chas W. Freeman Jr., "A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11," Middle East Policy Council, updated September 4, 2003. <http://www.mepc.org/articles-commentary/commentary/relationship-transition-and-then-9/11>

The “28 pages” report were released only recently (July 15, 2016) and it has revived the debate over Saudi involvement in the September 11th attacks. The “28 pages” reports details the investigations of Saudi ties to the attack. While several are listed, the report ultimately says while Saudi officials were involved in the attack; it is impossible to state that the Saudi government ordered these actions. Some are calling for the release of more information, particularly the specific investigations of those listed in the article (rather than the summarized conclusions)⁵. Meanwhile, others use it as a way to clear Saudi Arabia's name. They agree with the reports that it was a case of individuals participating in terrorism rather than a state-sponsored affair⁶.

Before analyzing the change in relationship, however, it is worth mentioning the nature of the United States-Saudi relationship. The relationship began in the 1940's due to a changing political landscape following WWII as well as the increased usage of oil as a fuel; From the 40's and throughout much of the Cold War the United States government enjoyed an extremely close relationship with the Saudi government. Often called a “special relationship”⁷, the United States has had nearly exclusive access to Saudi oil. In exchange, the Saudi government has access to United States military technologies, training, and assistance. Beyond this pragmatic exchange of resources, the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have historically shared the same strategic interests in the region. Specifically, the Cold War joined the two nations against the forces of communism (which directly conflicted with the religious rule of Saudi Arabia), as well as Iran (a regional rival of Saudi Arabia since the fall of the Shah's government).⁸ Since the end of the Cold War, the economic-militaristic relationship has continued despite ideological rifts. While the extent of the rifts will be examined in the

⁵ “FAQ,” 28Pages.org.

⁶ Ken Dilanian, “Secret 28 Pages of 9/11 Report Released, Hold No Proof of Saudi Link,” updated July 15, 2016. Accessed September 19, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/mews/us-news/secret-28-pages-9-11-report-rreleased-hold-no-proof-n610286>

⁷ Fahad Nazer, “Will US-Saudi 'Special Relationship' Last?,” *Al-Monitor* updated April 8, 2016. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/us-saudi-relations.html>

⁸ Freeman Jr., “A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11.”

literature review, it seems that they are not large enough to overcome America's need for oil or Saudi's desire for military power.

Question and Hypothesis

This paper will not determine whether the “28 pages” or any other evidence links Saudi Arabia to the September 11th attacks. Instead, it will assess the relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America between September 11th, 2001 and March 19th, 2003 (the beginning of the Second Gulf War) regardless of the validity (or lack thereof) of the accusations. This thesis hypothesizes that the relationship between the U.S and Saudi Arabia became colder during this era. The reasons for this change will be examined later in this prospectus.

Answering this question helps provide useful information that is still relevant to today's discussion of the United States-Saudi relationship. This thesis, however, will not explore this period of time (2003-2016).

The reasons the September 11th attacks and the 2nd Gulf War are being used as bookends for this relationship is because both of these dates massively shifted the paradigm of both sides. The September 11th attacks completely altered the way the United States looked at that Middle East. Before the attacks, the Middle East was often seen as a nuisance to the American public⁹, but seemed to pose no threat outside of the region. After the attacks, the United States government and public fell into a state of fear. At this point dealing with terrorism, both domestically and abroad, became one of the top, if not the top, pressing issue for American policymakers. To this day, Americans see still ripple effects from the attacks in their day-to-day life.

The 2nd Gulf War (starting March 19th, 2003) was significant because it was the first American invasion of the Middle East since Desert Storm (over 10 years before). While there had been troops

⁹ “The View Before 9/11: America's Place in the World,” Pew Research Center, published October 18, 2001, accessed September 16, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2001/10/18/the-view-before-911-americas-place-in-the-world/>

stationed in the Middle East, this escalated United States-Middle Eastern tensions and marked the a turning point for other nations' (both in the Middle East and elsewhere) opinion of the United States (changing from sympathetic to hostile). This is due to unilateral nature of the strike (Bush ignored the U.N. Security Council)¹⁰, as well as severe doubts about the presence of chemical weapons in Iraq¹¹.

For Saudi Arabia, the invasion was particularly incensing because they feared the fall of Iraq would negatively harm their security. Previous to 2001, Saddam Hussein had consistently quarreled with Iran over resources and territory. Without that counter-weight, Saudi Arabia felt Iran would become more powerful in the region and perhaps even threaten the kingdom itself. This anger would lead to a harsh dissolution of the relationship. American military bases were disbanded and U.S. - Saudi oil ties were weakened¹². While this is an interesting era as well, I feel that the inclusion of it in this thesis would lead to too broad a scope of information. Too much broadness could result in too many omissions of information thus leading to a weaker answer.

Literature Review

There are several schools of thought regarding the nature of the Saudi – American relationship and its relationship to the September 11th attacks. There are several beliefs about whether the relationship really worsened. Some politicians and journalists believe that the relationship remained largely the same. Then, there are disagreements as to what caused this change in relationship. Tied closely to this last question is the question of when the nature of the relationship began changing.

Regarding the the change of relationship, one opinion about the Saudi – American relationship states that this period signified a worsening of the relationship¹³. Interestingly, this stance is held by

¹⁰ Henry C.K. Liu, “Nonproliferation and Unilateral Proliferation,” Centre for Research on Globalization, updated July 1, 2006, accessed September 12, 2016. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-unilateralism/3089>

¹¹ Luke Harding, “Germans accuse US over Iraq weapons claim,” *The Guardian*, updated Thursday 1, 2004, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/apr/02/iraq.germany>

¹² David Ottaway, “The King and Us,” *Foreign Affairs*, published May/June 2009, accessed September 16, 2016.

¹³ Jennifer S. Delaney, “The Unlikely Partnership: The State of the U.S. - Saudi Relationship,” Hawaii Pacific University,

both those who are interested in maintaining and strengthening the U.S. - K.S.A relationship, as well as those who oppose it. Additionally, even those who believe that a negative shift in relations started before September 11th, 2001, mainly agree that this period only escalated the disagreements between the two nations¹⁴. The people who argue for this stance mainly seem to be diplomats and scholars who favor maintaining the relationship. Finally, there are those who argue that American – Saudi relationship was “not changed substantially¹⁵” due to the September 11th attacks at all, but these people are largely in the minority. Those who belong to this school of thought are tend to be the more ardent defenders of the U.S. - K.S.A. Relationship.

The next body of literature examines whether or not the attacks were the cause for the change in the relationship. Some argue that 9/11 was the defining moment for the decline of the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Reasons for this argument include: Saudi Arabia and its policies becoming visible to the eye of the American public (in a very negative light)¹⁶, the secrecy regarding the Saudi citizens involved in the attacks¹⁷, and allegations of state-funded terrorism¹⁸ from the Saudi government. Those who oppose this stance believe that the real reason for the decline in the relationship was the disagreement on foreign policy issues following the Cold War. America's lack of support for a Palestinian state, the continued deployment of American troops in Saudi Arabia, and an increased American focus on social development all led to an escalation in friction between the two

updated August 2009, accessed September 20, 2016, https://www.hpu.edu/CHSS/History/GraduateDegree/MADMSTheses/files/Jennifer_Delaney_Final_MADMS_Thesis_Aug_2009.pdf

¹⁴ Freeman Jr., “A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11.”

¹⁵ Gregory Gause, “Ten Years After 9/11: Managing U.S. - Saudi Relations,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, updated September 12, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/11/ten-years-after-9-11-managing-u.s.-saudi-relations-event-3349>

¹⁶ Freeman Jr., “A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11.”

¹⁷ Lauren Johnston, “Bush Won't Reveal Saudi 9/11 Info,” CBS News, updated July 30, 2003, accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/bush-wont-reveal-saudi-9-11-info-30-07-2003/>

¹⁸ Christopher Boucek, “Terrorism Out of Saudi Arabia,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, updated September 12, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/12/terrorism-out-of-saudi-arabia-pub-45520#saudis>

nations¹⁹.

In addition to American scholarship, I want to examine the Arab perspective on this relationship, particularly those within the Saudi relationship. I plan on using some of the most popular Saudi newspapers like *Al-Watan*, *Al-Riyadh*, and *Al-Madina*. While these newspapers are subject to censorship (either from government agencies or internally), some papers (specifically *Al-Watan*) are known for being more liberal and willing to criticize Saudi policies.²⁰ Additionally, it is worth examining outside sources and their view of this relationship because they are less subject to government control than the Saudi sources. That being said, the Saudi sources are worth examining because they can be seen as a reflection of government policy. The existence of more reports critical of US-Saudi relationship would reflect a Saudi government willing to show their discontent to their citizens and the international community.

Methodology

For methodology I plan to assess the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States by examining four different case studies: military and intelligence cooperation, political cooperation (e.g. meetings between heads of state), media exposure and public support in the opposite country, and economic dealings.

First, I will examine these case studies before the September 11th attacks (using a similar length of time). Then the meetings that fall within each of case studies will be compared to, both in the quantity and quality (e.g. if there is a trade agreement worth two billion dollars vs fifty million), to their counterparts after the attacks.

It is important to compare these case studies as separate sections because these relationships all

¹⁹ Freeman Jr., "A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11."

²⁰ "Saudi Arabia: Freedom of the Press 2015", Freedom House, accessed September 27, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/saudi-arabia>

determine the overall relationship, but the overall relationship does not determine these case studies. For example, many would say that the United States does not enjoy a particularly friendly relationship with China. Militarily, the U.S. and China disagree on the U.S. role in the Pacific as well as U.S. interference in Chinese foreign policy. Politically, there has been several hostile meetings between the heads of states and the two often criticize each other for their domestic politics. In terms of public support and media exposure, some U.S. citizens fear a Chinese “takeover” to the point that presidential candidates make “being tough on China” part of their platform. Despite all of this, however, China and the U.S. enjoy a close economic relationship that is second only to Canada. Arabia's relationship with the U.S. may be the same way, so it is important to analyze these facets separately.

Question: To what extent did the U.S. - K.S.A relationship change between 9/11 and the 2 nd Gulf War?
Sub-question 1: To what extent did U.S. - K.S.A military and intelligence cooperation change during this era?
Sub-question 2: To what extent did U.S. - K.S.A political cooperation change during this era?
Sub-question 3: To what extent did U.S. - K.S.A media exposure and public support of the other nation change during this era?
Sub-question 4: To what extent did U.S. - K.S.A trade ties change during this era?

Chapter Outlines

1. Introduction

a) Background

- i. Brief summary of history of U.S. - K.S.A relationship since 1931 (official recognition of Saudi Arabia as a state)

Research Question & Hypothesis

a) Methodology

b) Thesis Overview

2. Literature Review/Historical Background

- i. To what extent do people believe that the U.S. - Saudi relationship changed significantly during this area?
 1. To what extent do they attribute 9/11?
 2. To what extent do they attribute other events?
 3. To what extent do scholars believe that the major change in the relationship happened at the end of the Cold War?

- ii. Examining potential bias of sources regarding U.S. - K.S.A relationships (conspiracy theorists, apologists, etc...)
- 3. US-K.S.A Relationship between 9/11 and 2nd Gulf War
 - a) Military Cooperation
 - i. Joint Military Exercises before and after
 - ii. Ability for Saudi military to train within U.S. (Saudi pilots are currently being trained by the USAF)
 - iii. Coalitions joined during these eras
 - iv. Intelligence sharing agreements
 - b) Political Cooperation
 - i. Meetings between heads of states
 - ii. Support of military actions before and after the war
 - iii. Israeli-Palestinian issue (Saudi strongly pressing for 2-state solution)
 - iv. Criticism of domestic policies
 - c) Public Support and Media Exposure
 - i. Demonstrations and protests against other government
 - ii. NGO's and other groups that oppose or support the other government
 - iii. Pew Public Opinion Polls
 - d) Economic ties
 - i. Government facilitated deals (esp. arms for oil)
 - ii. Government economic policy regarding the other nation (high tariffs, easier laws to enter, etc...)
 - iii. Ties between private citizens from the two nations.
- 4. Conclusion
- 5. Reference List

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