

9/11 AND THE AMERICAN-SAUDI ALLIANCE:
A PRAGMATIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO UNLIKELY PARTNERS

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A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies at the
Croft Institute for International Studies
The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi
May 2017

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since July of 2016, Saudi Arabia has been in the public eye with the release of the “28 Pages” report and former President Obama’s veto of the Congressional decision to allow the victims of the September 11th attacks to sue Saudi Arabia. Despite allegations that stem nearly fifteen years back, the Saudi connection to 9/11 remains relevant to this day. Historically, these two nations have shared a “special relationship” based off mutual strategic interests and oil wealth, but did this relationship begin to crack earlier than these recent events show?

This thesis’ importance is that it helps reveal which aspects of alliances are most important to the United States and Saudi Arabia in their relationship. I hypothesized that the parts that matter most are the “pragmatic” parts of the relationship. In this instance, “pragmatic” is referring to military relations and economic agreements. Conversely, things like rhetoric or public opinion would probably not affect the relationship.

Furthermore, it helps explain some of the factors affecting American-Saudi relations today. In the face of anti-Saudi legislation and resentment rising in the United States, is it possible to trace any of this back between 2001 and 2003? Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that this era is critical to understanding Saudi-American relationships. American public opinion shifts during this time made Saudi Arabia a platform issue for some senators, like Chris Murphy and this led to a new actor in the relationship between the two states. What was previously a relatively low-tensions relationship between king and president became strained during this era due to the concerns of the American public and its representatives.

Based on my research, I argue that the Saudi-American relationships remained relatively constant following the September 11th attacks if measured by these “pragmatic” measures.

Surprisingly, however, American opinion did begin to affect the relationship and led to increased tensions that continue to affect the relationship to this day. My analysis is based off critical media analyses of Saudi and American newspapers, where I examine the language these newspapers use to cover American-Saudi links. Additionally, I analyze public opinion research to determine how the perceptions of the citizens of both nations changed over time. My research has found that contrary to popular opinion the “special relationship” was largely maintained in this era. That is the nations’ joint military and economic commitments remained relatively constant, but the nations’ public perception of each other declined as their leaders’ rhetoric became more hostile. This study helps clarify the current US-Saudi relationship and adds the Saudi perspective, which is largely unstudied. In addition, it also synthesizes various schools of thoughts on the reasons and magnitude of change in the US-Saudi perspective during this era.

The exact era being studied for this paper is between the September 11th attacks and the 2nd Gulf War. These events were chosen because they shifted both the American and Saudi view point. For the 9/11 attacks, American public opinion dropped dramatically against MENA nations and there was a renewed interest in the region. On the Saudi side, there was a heightened concern about the relationship as they were tied to the attacks through Osama bin Laden, as well as, the nationals who were a part of the attack against the United States. While there was an initial suspicion between the two sides, both sides worked to try and overcome this suspicion. One example of this can be seen in Chapter 3.1., where the U.S and Saudi Arabia formed co-faith fraternities for soldiers to try and reduce tensions between the two nations.

The 2nd Gulf War is important because it marked another spike in suspicion between Americans and Saudi Arabians, as Saudi Arabi warned the U.S. against the invasion of Iraq. Furthermore, it reinforced the idea of American soldiers as “crusaders” in the minds of some Arabs leading to a

decrease in opinion of Arabs towards Americans¹. The period between 9/11 and the 2nd Gulf War is also interesting because it marks an era where America was trying to form Middle Eastern policy and Saudi made some attempts to influence this policy.

Section 1.1: Historical Background

In the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s, following the Sykes-Picot agreement, the United States and the newly formed Saudi Arabian government did not share much of a relationship. For Americans, there was very little interest in Saudi Arabia due to the inhospitable geography, relative poverty, and seeming lack of natural resources. While the United States (and the rest of the major powers) sought oil at this point, some geologists at this point declared that there was very little chance of there being oil in the Arabian Peninsula².

In 1932, however, the Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) discovered oil in Bahrain. This discovery sparked their interest in the region and they quickly sought to exploit the rest of the peninsula before other oil companies could move in³. Fortunately for them, king ‘Abd al- ‘Aziz ordered a geological survey of his country, in the same year, in pursuit of water. While the king’s survey found no water, it did find oil and the king sent representatives to the United States. By 1933, Saudi Arabia sold their exploration rights to SOCAL in exchange for loans, rents, and funds. This discovery, and subsequent agreements, would fundamentally change the way the United States and Saudi Arabia interacted.

This change did not happen overnight. It would take the events of the Second World War for the United States to recognize the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia and its oil. While Saudi Arabia was still only a small producer of oil, it had come under attack by the Axis powers for refusing to sell them

¹ Susan B. Glasser, “Martyrs’ in Iraq Mostly Saudis”, *Washington Post*, May 15, 2005, Accessed April 25, 2017.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/14/AR2005051401270.html>

² Jane Waldron Grutz, “Prelude to Discovery,” *Aramco World* 50, no.1, 1999. Accessed March 25, 2017.
<http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/199901/prelude.to.discovery.htm>

³ Ibid.

oil⁴. In exchange for their loyalty, the United States extended the Lend-Lease Agreement, which allowed U.S. allies to borrow armaments for free during WWII, to Saudi Arabia (which was on the brink of financial ruin⁵) and established a military airbase in Saudi Arabia. Since the establishment of this airbase in 1943, there has been an American military presence in Saudi Arabia. In 1945, President Roosevelt formalized the alliance with King ‘Abd al- ‘Aziz. Since World War II, America has continued to provide military funding and training to the Saudi government.

As time passed, the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would only grow more intertwined. Some historians would even call the post-1945 bond between the two countries a “special relationship”⁶. Although often used to describe the cultural, diplomatic, and militaristic ties with the United Kingdom, in this paper it refers to the longstanding, elite-level economic and military ties that Saudi Arabia and the United States share. America and Saudi Arabia do not share many cultural ties nor does the relationship enjoy the popular support that the American-British relationship does. The economic side of the relationship revolves around the exchange of military equipment for oil, while the strategic aspect was based on a mutual distrust of communism and the USSR.

Economically, Saudi Arabia continued to find more crude oil and expanded their production to the point where they could control the point of oil. With its heavy reliance on oil during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era, America has been one of the largest trade partners of Saudi Arabia. Even in the aftermath of the OPEC oil crisis in 1973, the United States has been forced to rely on Arabian oil. Looking at figure 1, one can see that Saudi Arabia has always been at least one of the top three exporters of oil to America. While there has been a slight downshift in recent years, Saudi Arabia and

⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century: The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions*, Praeger and the Center for the Strategic and International Studies, published April 30, 2003. Pg. 105.

⁵ Ibid. pg 105

⁶ “Saudi Arabia: Relation with the United States”, Library of Congress, Accessed March 25, 2017. <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/59.htm>

OPEC still have significant market power and can affect the price for America and its partners⁷.

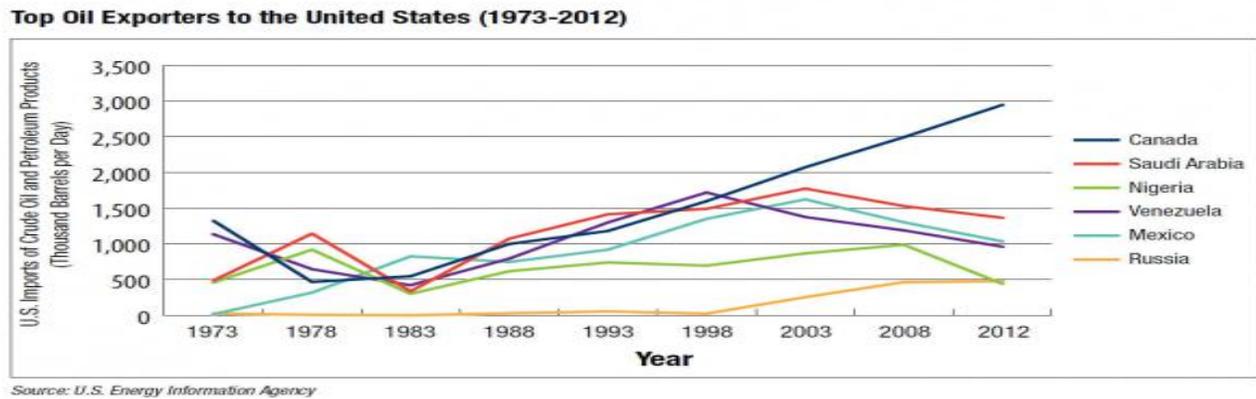


Figure 1

Only recently, due to a change in oil-extracting technology, have Canada and the United States been able to revive their oil production. Returning to figure 1, one can see Canada's jump in production. In addition, to this the United States has made a similar recovery due to the same technology. Due to the usage of shale oil and other innovations, America is now the third-largest oil producer in the world and reached its highest point of production since 1972⁸. In the face of decreasing Saudi Arabian reserves, it seems like the United States will begin to decrease their usage of Saudi oil in exchange for American and Canadian products.

Strategically, the relationship seems to have followed a slightly different path. While America is no longer forced to rely on Saudi Arabian oil, Saudi Arabia is too weak to survive without the American military. In terms of technology Saudi Arabia completely relies on American and English weaponry to arm their military. They have no capabilities to produce their own armaments. In addition to this weaponry deficiency, Saudi Arabia is undermanned compared to Iraq and Iran. Officials from

⁷ Elena Cherney, "Is OPEC Still Relevant in Energy Markets?" Wall Street Journal, published November 13, 2016. Accessed March 25, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-opec-still-relevant-in-energy-markets-1479092701>

⁸ Matt Egan, "Sorry, OPEC: U.S. oil production at 43-year high," CNN, March 1, 2016, accessed April 25 2017 <http://money.cnn.com/2016/03/01/investing/us-oil-production-near-record-opec/>

the Saudi Arabian government have even⁹ admitted that they would be unable to defend themselves from an Iranian invasion.

America, however, has a vested interest in protecting Saudi Arabia. Since the Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979, America has redoubled their efforts to protect the Saudi government to ensure the continued export of oil from the Arabian Peninsula¹⁰. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia was a counterbalance to Iranian and Iraqi aggression (until the 2nd Gulf War). In more recent days, however, former President Obama made friendly overtures to Iran and it seemed like Saudi Arabia was becoming less useful as an American strategic tool in the region. Although an Iranian-American friendship or alliance seems unlikely with President Trump's current hawkish tendencies, Iran is not quite the pariah to the American people as it was once was.

This is important because it makes America and Saudi Arabia's special relationship seem weaker, perhaps less essential than it was during the Cold War. While there were problems in the past, like the OPEC embargo and the freeze on weapons sales in the 70's, the distrust between the two nations seems at an all-time high. This seems largely due to the September 11th attacks and its subsequent fallout. The September 11th attacks were a series of terrorist attacks that aimed to destroy the Pentagon, the World Trade Center, and Washington D.C. with hijacked planes. The American public and government initially targeted Afghanistan, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban (thus leading to its invasion). Later, investigations and the nationality of the hijackers (19 of them were Saudi Arabian) seemed to implicate the Saudi Arabian government.

Part of the reasons suspicion towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia grew was the investigation into the failures that lead to the September 11th attacks. These investigations included a 28-page report that was censored for nearly thirteen years. Officially, both Saudi Arabian officials and the United

⁹ "Saudi Arabia." SIPRI. accessed November 9, 2016. http://fas.org/asmp/profiles/saudi_arabia.htm

¹⁰ Martin Indyk, *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East*, Simon & Schuster, published November 10, 1994. Pg 32.

States presidents have rejected official Saudi involvement in the attacks and stated that Al-Qaeda worked alone¹¹. Furthermore, former presidents George W. Bush and Obama claimed they kept them censored to protect national security and some senators specifically said they did so to protect the relationship with Saudi Arabia¹². Its secrecy, however, lead some to believe that it gave definitive proof of Saudi guilt¹³. When the actual report was released, though, it did not place the blame on the Saudi government. The Saudi administration, however, were upset that former president Obama's indiscretion. The relationship seemed to reach a new low as American lawmakers then passed a bill to allow the victims' families to sue the Saudi government for any role in the attack¹⁴.

In the face of increasing dissent from American voters and policy makers, does it make sense to continue this relationship? This paper examines whether the pragmatic ties of the two nations faltered during this era and whether the "special relationship" really did change.

¹¹ Nail Al-Jubeir, "Saudi Government Denies Funding 9/11 Attacks," *Politico*, April 14, 2017, accessed April 20, 2017. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/saudi-government-denies-role-in-funding-9-11-attacks-215014>

¹² Steve Kroft, "28 Pages", CBS News, published April 10, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-911-classified-report-steve-kroft/>

¹³ "About" The28Pages, accessed March 29, 2017, <https://28pages.org/>.

¹⁴ Mark Mazetti, "In 9/11 Document View of a Saudi Effort to Thwart U.S. Action on Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, published July 15, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Scholars who study the American-Saudi alliance typically fall into three major schools of thought. The differences between these different groups primarily regard two major questions. The first question is to what degree there was a change in relationships? While American-Saudi relationship has changed since its inception in 1945, there are some arguments about the importance of these changes. The second disagreement stems from when this downward shift occurred. Some scholars and diplomats, most notably Chas W. Freeman, the former American diplomat to Saudi Arabia, believe that the end of the Cold War was the impetus behind the decline in Saudi-American ties. Others, like Rachel Bronson, believe that the September 11th attacks marked a historic shift in relations.

Section 2.1: Minor Shift in Relations

The first school of thought believes that the two nations' relationship never ended or even changed significantly. Scholars like Mustafa Alani (Gulf Research Center), Gregory Gause (Texas A&M) and Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment), argue that the main aspects of the Saudi-American alliance are intact and, in some regards, that the relationship is stronger than ever. In one conference, Boucek stresses the increased cooperation with Saudi Arabia in terms of its intelligence sharing and security forces¹⁵. Furthermore, Gause points to the two nations shared history as evidence that America and Saudi Arabia have endured trying conflicts in the past and have always come out of these conflicts as allies.

However, it is hard to completely agree that there has been no shift in Saudi-American relations since 1991. These scholars overlook key aspects of the bond between the two states. Gause et al. ignore the hostile change in diplomatic statements and political interactions. For example, an examination of broader Middle Eastern politics reveal how that it is only after the end of the Cold War that Saudi

¹⁵ Gregory Gause, Mustafa Alani, and Christopher Boucek, "Ten Years After 9/11: Managing U.S.-Saudi Relations," (conference, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Washington D.C., September 12, 2011). <http://d2tjk9wifu2pr3.cloudfront.net/2011-09-12-Saudip1.mp3>

Arabia voiced concerns about American policy on Israel in the Middle East. Additionally, before the end of the Cold War the two countries tended to fear the threat of communist coups and the spreading influence of the Soviet Union¹⁶.

There is some merit to their arguments, however. In terms of military and economic commitments, both countries appear highly committed to maintaining the existing strategic and economic ties. Saudi Arabia remains the second largest exporter of oil to the United States and its allies. America still approves sales of military-grade arms, explosives, and vehicles to Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the United States government continues to help train Saudi Arabians as well as supporting the Saudi's missions, domestically and abroad (such as their current intervention into Yemen)¹⁷.

Section 2.2: Major Shift in Relations

At the other end of the spectrum, there are scholars who overestimate the change in Saudi – U.S. relations after the September 11th attacks. Rachel Bronson (CFR) argues that both the September 11th attacks and the end of the Cold War greatly shifted the way the nations interacted. She argues that due to the September 11th attacks, American policy in the Middle East faced greater public opposition than before, there was increasing anti-American sentiment in the kingdom, as well as an increased reliance on personal relationships (particularly ex-President Bush and Prince Bandar's relation)¹⁸.

Bronson's claims only reflect part of reality, however, as she underestimates the existing anti-American sentiment at the public level, the previous reliance on personal relationships between the nations' leaders, and the shift in resistance to American policy. America had already faced significant anti-American sentiment in Saudi Arabia due to the continued support of the Israeli state as well as the

¹⁶ “Ten Years After 9/11: Managing U.S.-Saudi Relations,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 12, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/12/ten-years-after-9-11-managing-u.s.-saudi-relations-event-3349>

¹⁷ Jackie Northam, “As Yemen’s War Worsens, Questions Grow about the U.S Role,” National Public Radio, published October 11, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/10/11/497563923/u-s-reconsiders-support-of-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen-conflict>

¹⁸ Jennifer Rizzo, “Prince and the ‘28 Pages’: Indirect 9/11 link to Saudi Royal Revealed,” CNN, published August 5, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/05/politics/28-pages-saudi-prince-bandar-9-11/>

presence of American military bases following the 1991 Desert Shield operation. This operation deployed several thousands of American soldiers into Saudi Arabia to prevent an Iraqi invasion. When the first Gulf War ended, most troops withdrew but contingent of Air Force troops remained in Jeddah and Riyadh until 2003. While the Saudi government approved, many of its citizens did not, nor did some Muslims in surrounding nations who saw it as an occupation of holy sites¹⁹.

Another example of anti-American sentiment that Bronson does not wholly consider is the funding of terrorism by Saudi citizens. Private subjects of Saudi Arabia gave large sums of money to Salafi groups that supported violent opposition to what they call American and European imperialism²⁰. This would come to its zenith in 2004 with the Khobar Tower massacres. During these attacks, Salafi extremists killed nearly 22 people and wounded 25 more. Specifically, it targeted non-Muslims or as the group called them “Crusaders”. Later, it would be revealed that the members of this group belonged to a Saudi Arabian faction of Al-Qaeda (which was being funded by Saudi Arabians)²¹.

Finally, the usage of personal relationships had always been an integral part of the partnership. According to Bob Woodward, the personal relationship between the Saudi royal family and both Bush administrations helped resolve many public disputes²². While the September 11th attacks may have encouraged these behaviors past their previous levels, Bronson's original statements overlook the long history of personal ties and elite diplomatic relationship shared by the two governments.

Section 2.3: Relationship Shift Primarily Due to Cold War

Another debate surrounding the U.S-K.S.A alliance is when the shift occurred. One group argues that the shift in the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia occurred primarily

¹⁹ “US Pulls out of Saudi Arabia”, BBC, published April 29, 2003. accessed March 29, 2017
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2984547.stm

²⁰ John Roth, Douglas Greenburg, and Serena Willie, “Monograph on Terrorist Financing,” National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Published 2004

²¹ Abdul Hameed Bakier, “Lessons from Al-Qaeda’s Attack on the Khobar Compund,” Jamestown Foundation, published August 11, 2006. Accessed March 29, 2017.

²² Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (Simon & Schuster, New York 2006)

after the Cold War. Chas W. Freeman argues that the relationship fell apart primarily due to the end of the shared threat of the Soviet Union. No longer did the U.S. or Saudi Arabia worry about a Soviet-backed Iran, Soviet-funded dissidents domestically, or other Communist related threats. Instead, he asserts Saudi Arabia could focus more on other issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian issues, and other regional problems and rivalries²³. Additionally, the United States had more freedom in criticizing Saudi Arabia (particularly on human rights violations) as they were no longer as vital in world or regional politics as they previously had been.

Freeman also argues that the September 11th attacks were not that important in affecting the relationship. While the attacks acted as a spark to push the two nation closer together, it was merely an acceleration of the pre-existing problems and did little to create new ones²⁴. Specifically, Freeman argues that the previous lack of involvement by the American public and Congress was the true reason why the September 11th attacks affected the relationship. More specifically, before the September 11th attacks people tended not to focus on Saudi Arabia and it was primarily an elite level relationship (executive to executive). After the attacks, however, light was cast on this tie and, according to Freeman, the American public was unhappy that their government was so closely tied to a nation whose subjects were heavily involved in the September 11th attacks as well as in al-Qaeda²⁵.

What Freeman fall somewhat short is in his rejection of the idea that new issues were created by the September 11th attacks. Although he is partially right in saying that it merely brought old issues to the public's attention, he fails to acknowledge potential Saudi Arabian participation in the September 11th attacks as well other terrorist plots. While it's impossible to determine whether they were involved or not with the available information, the controversy stirred by the attacks have certainly lead to

²³ "Ambassador Chas W. Freeman, Part I – A Relationship in Transition – And Then 9/11," Saudi-US Relations Information Service, published September 12, 2003. <http://susris.com/2003/09/12/ambassador-chas-w-freeman-part-i-a-relationship-in-transition-and-then-911/>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

additional complications that did not exist during the Cold War era.

Section 2.4: Relationship Shift Primarily Due to 9/11

Other scholars argue that the September 11th attacks were the primary driver of the dissolution of the bond between the United States and Saudi Arabia. While these scholars acknowledge that the Cold War did cause some divisions between the two nations, these scholars believe that the main issues plaguing the relationship today stem from the September 11th attacks and Saudi Arabia's alleged connection to these attacks. One of the main proponents of this school of thought is Christopher Blanchard (CFR).

This argument contends that the American-Saudi relationship had issues both before and after the end of the Cold War, but according to Blanchard they were minor issues. The Palestinian-Israeli issue was just a way for the Saudi government to build popular domestic support. The differences in strategy for the two nations were of relatively little concern, so long as borders and shipping routes stayed secure.²⁶ For Blanchard and other scholars like him, the most important part of the relationship is the long-lasting economic bond. Blanchard also considers American and Congressional support of the relationship (or lack thereof) to be important. What Blanchard does not consider a critical part of the previous strategic alliance the Saudi and American governments had during the Cold War. Blanchard is too quick to overlook these Cold War ties as they helped define the relationship for over thirty years. Some of the issues created by the end of the Cold War, when both countries were seeking a new strategic identity (for America, losing the USSR led to a loss of strategic focus), persist to this day. Although Iran can be seen as a common enemy, it does not pose quite the same threat to the United States as the Soviet Union. While America is still interested in the MENA region, its objectives tend to align with Saudi Arabia's goals far less than before.

²⁶ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, published September 20, 2016, accessed November 9 2016. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

Section 2.5: Synthesis of Different Schools of Thought

These schools of thought provide important contributions into the study of American-Saudi relations after the September 11th attacks, but they do have some shortcomings. By synthesizing them, this paper aims at providing a more complete view of the Saudi-American alliance. For instance, it is important to consider both the historical background as well as the new dynamic introduced by the 9/11 attacks. Rejecting the Soviet-era relationship leaves out as much pertinent information as overlooking the importance of the September 11h attacks. Additionally, it is important to track the relationship along several axes to determine where it changed. Again, where some scholars came up short is that they tended to focus on more traditional indicators of geo-political alliances, such as the sale of oil and arm between the two nations. While these things are important, it is also important to track the citizens and subjects of the states.

By tracking them, this paper shows the importance the American public had in altering the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. While the impact was relatively low between the Gulf War and the 9/11 attacks, it has grown into a strong presence today that affects congressional debates and bills. Without tracking the importance of the public, one could look at today's relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States and be unable to see the impact the American public has had on creating tensions between the two nations.

Chapter 3: Analysis & Methods

This thesis examines a question that contains two parts. The first part is whether the Saudi-American relationship changed since the September 11th attacks. One school of thought suggested that the changes to the American-Saudi relationship since the September 11th attacks were very minor. The second part asks if there was a change in relationship, what caused this change in relationship? Again, certain schools of thought posit that the most important reason for a change in the U.S.-Saudi relationship was the end of the Cold War.

After examining this question further, however, it made sense to break it down even further. By separating the relationship into two different categories (“pragmatic” and other) and then the four different aspects (military, economic, public opinion, and diplomacy), I am now able to see how different events affected different aspects of the relationship. While much of the “pragmatic” side of the alliance was more affected by the end of the Cold War, the other categories were more heavily impacted by the September 11th attacks.

Furthermore, the indicators I chose to use were based off a mixture of other scholarship in the field in addition to attempting to research the Saudi Arabian side more closely. By examining oil and arms transfers, it was clear to see that the mainstay of the “pragmatic” ties between the two nations were still running very strong. The use of public opinion polls and media, however, allowed me to examine other aspects of the relationship that were typically uncovered or perhaps overlooked by other scholarship.

Section 3.1A: Strategic Ties

Oil may be the lifeblood of the American-Saudi relationship, but another critical aspect of this linkage is the defensive and strategic needs of both countries. The United States is willing to provide advanced military equipment (like fighter jets and smart bombs) in exchange for petroleum. While the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia claims, they are for defensive purposes, they have also been used in incursions into Yemen²⁷. The strategic ties between the two nations, however, are much deeper than just arms sales. The United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shared strategic interests in the region, trained together often, and worked together within the intelligence community. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia allowed United States military bases in the kingdom for over ten years following Desert Shield. Despite their history, after the September 11th attacks, one may have expected a decrease in relationships. Several of the terrorists in the September 11th attacks were from Saudi Arabia as well as Osama bin Laden himself. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia's involvement was shrouded in secrecy until very recently with the "28 Pages" report.

The period between the September 11th attacks and the 2nd Gulf War shows, though, that while the relationship did decline, it was only to a minor degree and can be more largely attributed to peacetime complacency than inter-state hostility. Despite the end of the Cold War, which some predicted would lead to a decline in the U.S.-K.S.A. alliance²⁸, strategic concerns in the region (such as a stronger Iran and increasing domestic terrorism) guaranteed a future relationship between the two nations.

Joint Military Operations and Training

Since 1953, the United States military trained Saudi Arabian forces. These joint military

²⁷ Jackie Northam, "As Yemen's War Worsens, Questions Grow about the U.S Role," National Public Radio, published October 11, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/10/11/497563923/u-s-reconsiders-support-of-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen-conflict>

²⁸ Chas W. Freeman, "A Relationship in Transition and Then 9/11", *Middle East Policy Council*, published September 19, 2003, accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.mepc.org/articles-commentary/commentary/relationship-transition-and-then-9/11?print>

exercises were primarily a part of the containment strategy of the Cold War, in which the United States sought to limit Soviet influence throughout the Middle East and the world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was largely willing to join into these pacts because they were then able to purchase American arms.²⁹ More importantly, however, Saudi Arabia was interested in gaining access to American technology to extract oil and benefit from its profits³⁰. It was not until later, around 1964, when the Yemeni civil war acted as a satellite war for the British (with some American assistance) and the Soviet Union that the Soviets began to fear communist influence in the Arabian Peninsula³¹.

The Soviet Union, by 2001, however, had been disbanded for over ten years. Communism was no longer a threat and political tensions were flaring directly before the September 11th attacks (particularly over the Palestinian-Israeli issue). Although the United States had protected Saudi Arabia during the 1st Gulf War, many Saudi subjects felt that the withdrawal of American troops was overdue. This “occupation” combined with other tense political issues like the Israeli issue, increasing domestic terrorism in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi’s junior role in the partnership seemed poised to tear the U.S.-Saudi relationship asunder³². With the addition of the September 11th attacks, the United States relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seemed finished. According to a United States researcher during this era, many of the Saudi officers were recalled from American training programs, Saudi Arabia reduced their spending on American military equipment, and there was halt to cooperation between the two militaries³³. By the beginning of the 2nd Gulf War in 2003, these problems had disappeared and cooperation was even greater than pre-9/11 levels. This rekindled cooperation was

²⁹ “172. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia” *Department of State*, published September 3, 1955., accessed November 28, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v13/d172>

³⁰ *Ibid.* 3

³¹ Asher Aviad Orkaby, “The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1968.” Harvard University, published April 2014, accessed March 29, 2017. https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/12269828/Orkaby_gsas.harvard_0084L_11420.pdf?sequence=1

³² Christopher M. Blanchard, “Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations,” Congressional Research Service, published September 20, 2016, accessed November 9 2016. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

³³ Lt. Col. Michael Sippel, “Saudi Arabia: The Changing Paradigm and Implications for the United States Military Training Mission,” *The DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management* 25, no. 4 (2003): pg. 1-12

the result of a rising and belligerent Iranian state that worried both the United States and Saudi Arabia³⁴. Saudi Arabia feared terrorist attacks that were funded by the Iranian government as well as military engagements in surrounding states (such as Yemen). Ultimately, both fears would come true for the Saudi Arabian government albeit not during the period covered by this paper. The Yemeni war, for example, is just one example of the Iranian-Saudi conflict as they are both attempting to prop up their side's choice.

Table I. U.S. Military Training Provided to Saudi Personnel

	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007
Students Trained	1,110	1,664	596	416	524	849 ^a
Value (\$ million)	\$57.4	\$20.2	\$21.1	\$11.2	\$8.9	\$39.2

Source: U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of State Joint Reports to Congress on Foreign Military Training, FY2002-FY2008. Available at <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt/>.

Figure 2: In 2001, the United States trained 2157 students and received \$90 million dollars

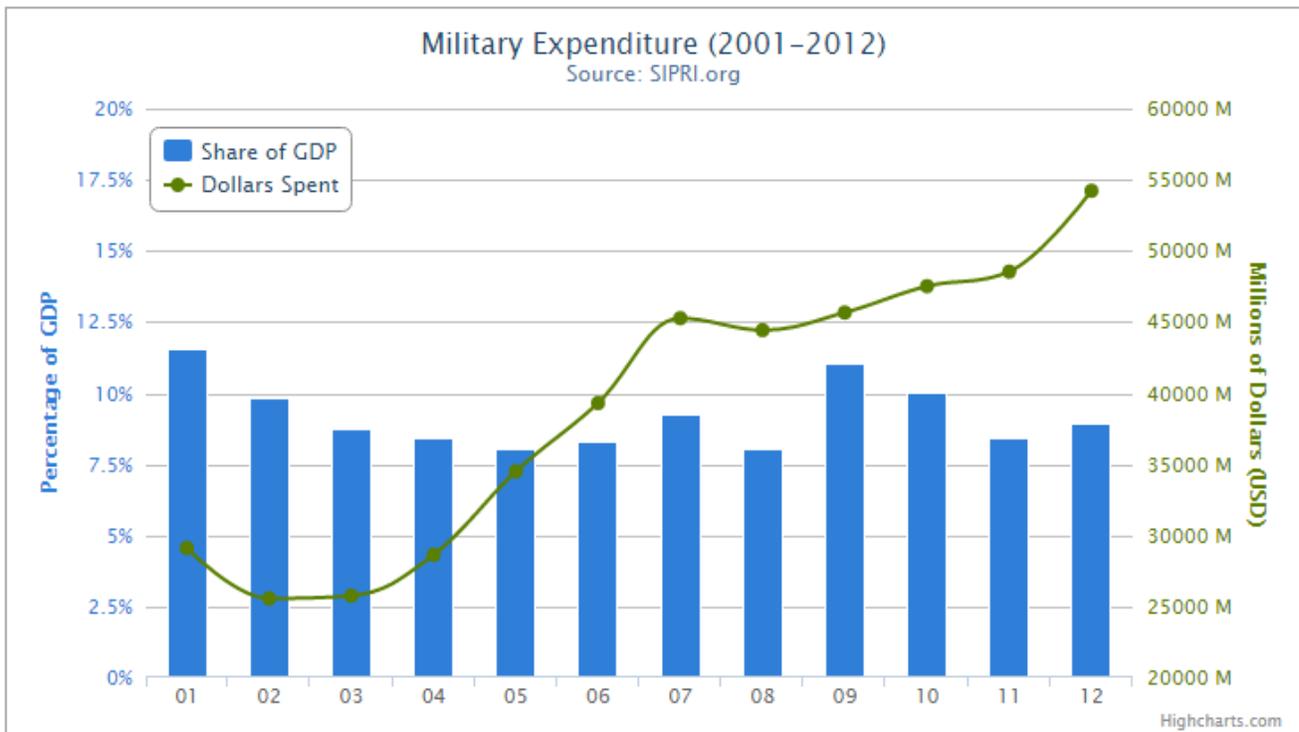
The numbers do not seem to indicate that the United States and Saudi Arabia reconciled after the September 11th attacks of U.S. From 2001 to 2003, there was a 70 million dollar decrease in the amount of training the Saudi armed forces received. That seems like a marked decrease, but it is important to remember that as the training of Saudi Arabian officers continued, there was a decreasing amount of training needed. The Saudi officers would be able to transmit the knowledge gained from the various American programs to their colleagues. Furthermore, as an officer becomes trained he would be less likely to need additional training. It does not make sense to repeatedly send an officer to the same training year after year. Thus while 2001 was a high point for personnel trained, eventually the amount of training in the military became somewhat saturated. More simply put, a decreasing number of soldiers needed training. Additionally, the purpose of this program is not to make money. Most of the money spent to support this mission is given to Saudi Arabia from the United States for military

³⁴ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, published September 20, 2016, accessed November 9 2016. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

assistance. Furthermore, training only costs hundreds of millions of dollars which is a tiny amount for each country relative to their overall wealth. The purpose of the training is to build cooperation with foreign armies and increase their combat effectiveness. In doing so these forces will be better equipped to work with the United States and help pursue U.S. strategic interests³⁵.

Finally, one of the reasons for the decrease in training was the arrival of American troops in the Middle East. After 2001 and the September 11th attacks, America declared war on Afghanistan and many soldiers were moved to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Initially, America suspected Osama bin Laden was in Afghanistan and they wanted to eliminate him as well as the groups harboring him. Saudi Arabia proved to be a useful staging ground to access Afghanistan. With an increased number of American soldiers in the region, Saudi Arabia saw a reduced need to spend on their own military budget. Instead, they could rely on the United States to protect them from external threats, while

2 For Saudi Arabia



³⁵ "USMTM Mission" (USMTM, Riyadh, published November 1, 2015, accessed November 29, 2016. <http://usmtm.org/>)

focusing their own military spending on domestic threats or policing. Looking at the military expenditure chart above, this is reflected in Saudi Arabia's decreasing military expenditures during the 2001-2003 period, where Saudi Arabia spent less as both a percentage of the GDP and in terms of dollars spent. One can also see that they would resume spending money after 2003 due to the invasion of Iraq. Saudi Arabia wanted to arm themselves in case of a reprisal from Iraq into Saudi Arabia.

Military training was not the only bond keeping the American government linked to the Saudi family. As previously mentioned, the rising threat of the Iranian government forced the two nations to cooperate.

i. Iranian Threat

One of the oldest clichés in foreign policy is that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, but in the case of the United States-Saudi relationship it has been a guiding tenet. For Saudi Arabia, Iran is a direct threat. Obviously, there are clear ideological differences between the two countries, but there are also strategic tensions as well. Iran is a very large nation, both geographically and demographically, that is setting itself up to be a regional powerhouse. That is, they will attempt to insert themselves into regional conflicts to gain power and prestige. This can be seen in the modern-day conflicts of Yemen and Syria. Saudi Arabia has a very similar goal, attempting to dominate the politics of the region through a mixture of religious authority, economic enticements, and military might³⁶. The primary inhibitor to a full-fledged war between the two nations is Iraq, which somewhat acts as a buffer zone for the two countries. For now, the two countries content themselves by fighting proxy wars and sending terrorists attacks.

For the United States, Iran created a different complication. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution and subsequent hostage situation in Iran, U.S.-Iran relations have never really recovered. Years of

³⁶ George Joffe, “Saudi Arabia: Victim or Hegemon,” *Middle East Institute*, Published October 1, 2009, Accessed January 24, 2017 <http://www.mei.edu/content/saudi-arabia-victim-or-hegemon>

political oppression under the Shah (a political leader who enjoyed the financial and military support of the U.S.) made the Iranian people bitter and distrustful of the American governments. Meanwhile, the events of the hostage situation shocked many Americans who grew to fear and hate the unfamiliar Shi'a regime. During the hostage crisis of 1979, Iranian citizens stormed the American embassy and captured 52 Americans as retaliation for supporting the straw. While not originally supported by the Iranian government, the citizens held them as hostages for nearly a year and a half before releasing them back to the United States. Furthermore, Iran allied itself with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This led to a strategic necessity in the U.S. government to "contain" the spread of communism in the Middle East.

The Saudi administration fears Iran due to the Iranian advantage in population. In 2002, Iran had nearly three times the population of Saudi Arabia³⁷. Even with modern technologies, American training, and other force multipliers, the Saudi military would never be able to compete with the Iranians. To successfully hold off an Iranian attack, the Saudi military would need more soldiers. That is where the United States and Saudi interests coincide. One Saudi official said, "...no matter how built up we become, we can't replace the U.S....The U.S. is our protector."³⁸ Due to this statement and others like it, the U.S.-Saudi bond seems unbreakable. While there may be disagreements about domestic policies and questions over Saudi commitments, both countries recognize the need for the other. The Saudi government provides a Muslim ally in the region who can provide access to the Persian Gulf and other areas of the Middle East, while the United States acts a barrier to invasion of Saudi Arabia. Iran would never invade Saudi Arabia with the knowledge that United States would launch retaliatory strikes on Iran. Besides mere survival, Saudi Arabia allows the American presence

³⁷ "Population, total" *World Bank*,
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?contextual=region&end=2002&locations=SA-IR&start=2002&view=bar>

³⁸ "Saudi Arabia", *SIPRI*

because the barrier role it plays allows Saudi Arabia to run proxy wars with Iran.

The reason the Iran issue was so salient after the September 11th attacks for both America and Saudi Arabia was the expectation that Saddam Hussein would fall in the 2nd Gulf War. Up until that point, Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Khomeini's Iran played a role in America's dual containment strategy which allowed both nations to fight each other to keep them both weakened. As long as the two nations existed, they would expend their military might on each other rather than on. Conflict between the two nations would also help the Saudi Arabian government as it would alleviate fears of attacks and reduce the regional influence of its two largest rivals.

The Second Gulf War, however would remove Hussein from office and create a power vacuum that Iran could fill. While Saudi Arabia did not trust Iraq, they did not want Saddam Hussein overthrown until they could ensure a secure government. They feared the sectarian splits in Iraq as well as the strengthening of the Shi'ite faction within Iran. Not only does this trepidation show a split between the American and Saudi government, but Saudi's refusal to join the coalition was a major point of contention between the two³⁹.

ii. Intelligence Sharing Agreements

Despite their overwhelming cooperation in training, exercises, and conflicts (like Desert Shield), there were a few points of disagreements between America and Saudi Arabia. One area that the Saudi and American government found little common ground was in intelligence sharing agreements. While the Saudis agreed to provide intelligence to the American government, often, they acted indifferently to the United States or with hostile intent.

This indifference and hostility can be most clearly seen in the United States assessment of the Saudi intelligence force in the "28 Pages" report. This formerly classified report was a part of the

³⁹ Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinesbusch, *The Iraq Causes and Consequences War*, Lynne Rienner Publishing, Published May 30, 2006.

investigation into the causes of the September 11th attacks and examines Saudi links to the attacks⁴⁰.

Previously, the report had been censored because former President Bush feared that it would turn the American public against the Saudi nation. Due to Saudi Arabia's importance as a staging area in the 2nd Gulf War, Bush refused to release the report.

This report, however, shows the rift between the two nations as it condemns the Saudi government's intelligence services as unhelpful. During the investigation, there was this exchange between the General Counsel of the United States Treasury Department (Aufhauser) and the Vice-Chairman on the Select Committee on Intelligence (Bereuter),

“There is an almost intuitive sense, however, the things are not being volunteered. So, I want to fully inform you about it, that we have to ask and when we have to seek and we have to strive. I will give you one-and-a-half examples. The first is, after some period, the Saudis have agreed to the designation of a man named Julaydin, who is notoriously involved in all of this; and his designation will be public within the next 10 days. They came forward to us 2 weeks ago and said, okay, we think we should go forward with the designation and a freeze order against Mr. Julaydin. We asked, what do you have on him? Because they certainly know what we have on him, because we shared it as we tried to convince them they that they ought to join us. The answer back was, nothing new.

MR. BEREUTER: Do you believe that?

MR. AUFHAUSER: No, I think that taxes credulity, or there is another motive we are not being told.”⁴¹

This exchange demonstrates that not only were the Saudi's not providing intelligence (according to agreements between the countries) but they were doing so purposefully. Saudi Arabia's awareness of American intelligence levels clearly shows that Saudi intelligence is at least somewhat effective, and it would be difficult to attribute a lack of intelligence provided to incompetence. Whether that motive was hostile or otherwise cannot be determined, but this behavior clearly deviates from other Saudi military behavior where they closely followed U.S. interests.

⁴⁰ “Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001”, 107th Congress, published December 2002. pg 415-443.

⁴¹ Ibid. 440

This largely seems to stem from that fact that Saudi did not believe itself to benefit from these agreements. In fact, this lack of intelligence sharing would continue to be a problem until the middle of 2003, when Riyadh was the subject three major bombings. In these attacks, suicide bombers killed nearly 40 people and wounded 160 more. This attack was aimed at westerners, but many Saudis were still injured or killed⁴².

After this, Saudi Arabia became more cooperative with the United States. They recognized the threat that al-Qaeda and terrorism posed to their state and realized they needed additional assistance⁴³. According to the 9/11 Commission, after the 2003 attacks, “the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is now locked in mortal combat with al Qaeda.”⁴⁴ What this seems to indicate is that the Saudi government only assists the United States when it is beneficial to Saudi interests. While this is true of many relationships between nations, if the actions one nation is taking are at the detriment of their ally, it seems like the relationship would falter or fail.

iii. Trends of Military Relationship

Of these three different aspects of the American-Saudi relationship, there seems to be one common trend. As mentioned above, the Saudi government's willingness to work with the United States correlates with their confidence and ability to defend themselves. When feeling vulnerable, Saudi Arabia is much more willing to work with the United States government. While there is no example of this directly in the timeline selected for this thesis, one can examine two key eras that occurred directly before and after the timeline. From 1996 until 2003, the Saudi government was of no use to the American intelligence services because there was no more Russian/Communist threat, terrorism was

⁴² “Saudi Official Blames Riyadh Attacks on al-Qaeda,” CNN, published November 9, 2003. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/11/08/saudi.explosion/>

⁴³ Daniel Byman, “The U.S.-Saudi Arabia Counter-terrorism Relationship” Brookings Institute, Published May 24, 2016. Accessed February 12, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-u-s-saudi-arabia-counterterrorism-relationship/>

⁴⁴ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (New York: 2004), 373.

not occurring in Saudi Arabia (aside from a minor attack in 1996), and the Iranian state was relatively weak⁴⁵. Additionally, they distanced themselves from the United States military and began to make moves to remove American bases in Saudi Arabia.

The year 2003, however, marks a shift in Saudi commitment to the American alliance. Due to the bombings, Saudi and American officials agreed to only move the location of the USMTM (United States Military Training Mission) from Riyadh to a more rural location. Besides the relocation, there was the renewed commitment to counter terrorism and the reduction of funding extremists. Without these bombings, the sharing of intelligence between the two states would never have occurred, although the threat of Iran would ensure the military alliance was never dissolved.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

SECTION 3.2: ECONOMIC TIES

America and Saudi Arabia's alliance has always had one extremely important resource at its heart: oil. Since 1944, when Aramco, an oil company based out of the United States, discovered oil in Saudi Arabia, the two countries interests have coincided. The United States had (and still has) an interest in importing oil. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia was more than willing to provide oil to the United States on several conditions. First, the United States was to be the sole extractor of oil. This was because King 'ibn Saud believed the European powers still had colonial aspirations and did not want to become a mandate. Second, America would have to provide military technologies to Saudi Arabia. Third, Saudi Arabia asked for infrastructural support. This would result in the construction of the Saudi highway system and several cities by ARAMCO. Fourth, America would have to provide technical assistance and expertise. At this point, Saudi Arabia did not have a large enough number of people who could maintain the new military equipment and the oil extraction equipment.⁴⁶ Since this agreement in 1945, close-knit trading ties have continued. Specifically, in the last decade, there is no denying the importance of this economic exchange, as seen in the 2010 arms deal between the United States and Saudi Arabia estimated to be about 60 billion dollars of aircraft and weaponry.⁴⁷ In 2001, however, trade ties seemed to be at serious risk due to political complications.

In the wake of the September 11th attacks, were trade ties damaged? Did the U.S. decide to import less oil? There are two primary factors that this thesis will examine: the United States import of petroleum products from Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian import of American-made weapons. If economic ties declined, the cutoff of petroleum products to the United States would not have been a crippling blow. At the time, America's primary exporter was Canada and there was a strategic American oil reserves. In addition to this domestic production, the 2nd Gulf War lead to increased access to oil

⁴⁶ Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia*, (OUP, 2006, Oxford)

⁴⁷ "Daily News Brief", Council on Foreign Relations, published October 10, 2010, accessed October 18, 2016.

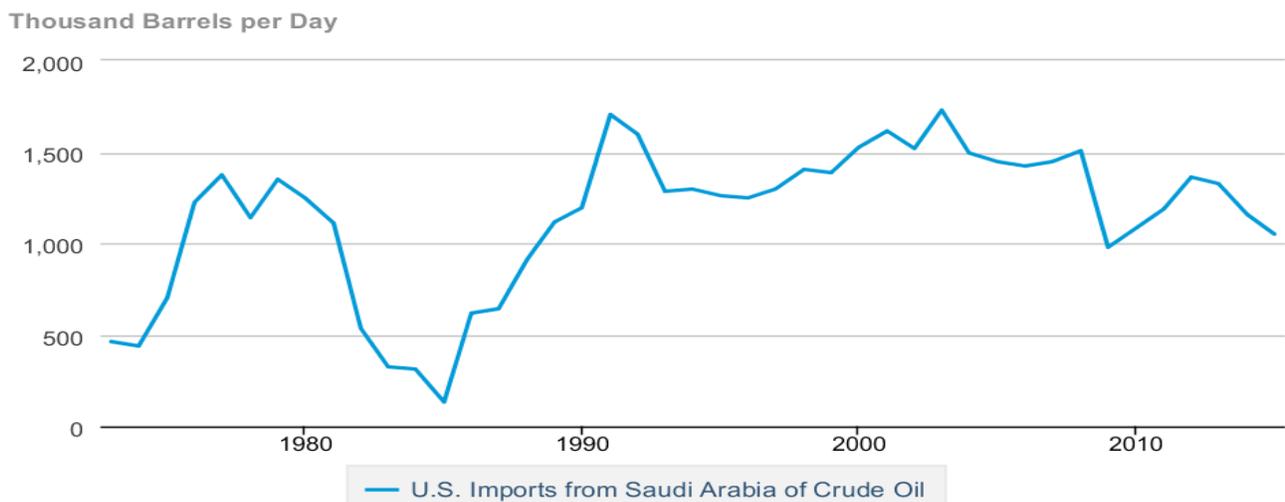
from Iraq. Despite these factors, losing the Saudi Arabian market would still inflict damage on the American economy, potentially causing increased the prices of fuel, slowing growth, raising levels of unhappiness, and inflating military spending (due to higher maintenance costs of vehicles).

In addition to American import of oil, I also want to examine the U.S. export of arms and military technologies. Again, if the U.S. and Saudi Arabian governments' relationship regressed, the United States would be less likely to sell arms to their ally. This is especially true if the American government suspected Saudi involvement in terrorist attacks. Why would America sell arms to a country that might potentially use them against them?

i. U.S. Imports of Oil

After the September 11th attacks, the United States primarily blamed Afghanistan for the attacks on the World Trade Center. The American government quickly cut all ties with the Taliban government (who were housing Osama bin Laden), invaded the nation, and replaced the government. With the discovery and subsequent investigation into Saudi involvement, though, there was never a similar U.S. response. U.S. - Saudi trade ties seemed to hold strong and there never seemed to be a renunciation of

U.S. Imports from Saudi Arabia of Crude Oil



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

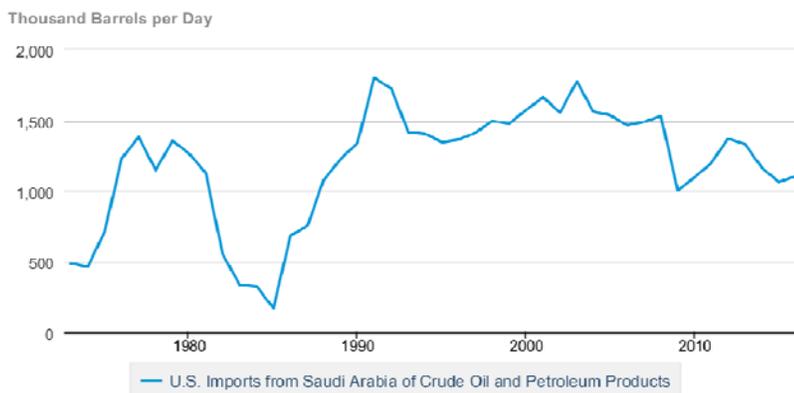
Saudi Arabia.

The amount of oil imported from Saudi Arabia was not be heavily affected by the attacks.

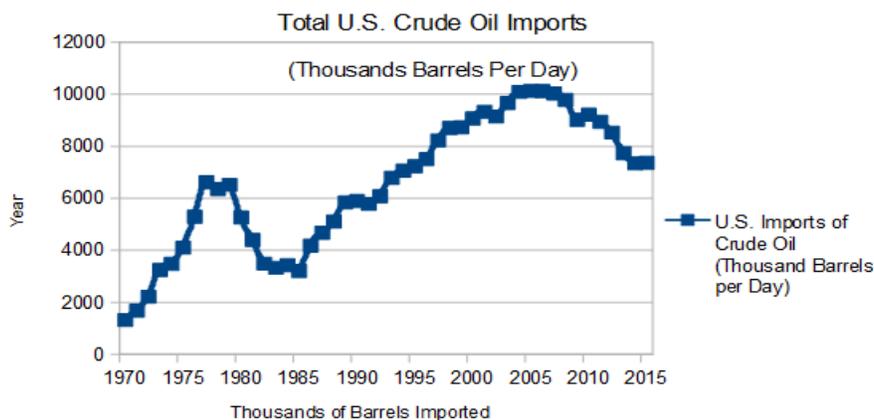
Judging from the growth from 2000 to 2003, one does not see much of a change in importation amount.

The United States needed oil for its war in Afghanistan (as well as consumer consumption) and ideological differences were no concern to the buyer or the seller.

U.S. Imports from Saudi Arabia of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

One possible conclusion to draw from this is that American-Saudi relations did not suffer at all during this era. Yet, comparing the Saudi-Arabia imports with total U.S. imports with the figures above reveal an interesting trend. Specifically, the proportion of crude oil that the U.S. imports from Saudi

Arabia drops every year. Yes, the daily thousands of barrels remain constant, but they make up a smaller and smaller proportion of U.S oil imports every year. Why did the Saudi proportion of oil exports to the U.S. drop every year after recovering from the oil glut in 1986?

There are multiple possible explanations for these shrinking levels of Saudi imports. The first is that after the 1973 oil crisis, where OPEC enforced an oil embargo on the United States in protest of American support for Israeli in the 1973 war, the American government made a conscious effort to ensure the nation's energy security by avoiding importing oil from Arab OPEC. One way to do this was diversify the United States energy holdings. For example, under President Nixon, Project Independence was implemented which aimed to “promote domestic energy independence.”⁴⁸ The programs, however, were not successful as shown through the overall trends of crude oil importation. The United States’ energy needs only increased over time and America could not avoid importing from OPEC (though it did a better job of avoiding them than the UK or other European nations).

Another potential explanation for the declining share of Saudi Arabian oil is the technological advancements in oil extractions. Saudi Arabia has historically had some of the largest proven oil reserves in the world, only being matched by Venezuela who produces and exports only about a one fifth of Saudi Arabia’s production and exports⁴⁹. W In addition, they have been relatively easy to access using traditional oil extraction techniques (particularly traditional onshore drilling). This is pertinent because this technique has been available and commonly implemented since the 1940's. Other countries including the United States and Canada have not enjoyed the same ease in their petroleum extraction.

In the last 30 years, however, the world has seen the advent of the usage of oil sands, hydraulic fracturing (or fracking), improvements in seismic imaging, as well as a slew of other technological

⁴⁸ “Oil Embargo, 1973-1974”, Office of the Historian, accessed October 27, 2016.

⁴⁹ “International Energy Statistics: Crude Oil Proved Reserves 2016,” U.S. Energy Information Administration, accessed November 1, 2016. <http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/data/browser/>

innovations. These innovations not only have increased the speed at which oil can be extracted, but where it can be extracted. For example, a large percentage of Canadian oil reserves are in these oil sands which in the past were unavailable for them⁵⁰. Not only has it aided Canada, but other countries like Russia and Iraq are able to utilize this technology to gather previously unobtainable resources. What all of this meant (and still means) for Saudi exports is that they have become a smaller player (comparatively) in the global oil market and this is reflected in their decreasing share of the U.S. crude oil imports.⁵¹ The reason for the United States decision to diversify where they buy from is the fear of another OPEC crisis (as aforementioned).

Despite these explanations for a declining share, it is still worth mentioning that Saudi Arabia did make up a very large crude oil imports for the U.S. During this period, Saudi Arabia still contributed roughly 20% of all American crude oil imports. While no longer dominant as it was throughout the 80's and 90's, there is no denying the economic advantages of trading with Saudi Arabia. In addition to these economic advantages, the United States continued to work with Saudi Arabia due to strategic needs as well.

ii. Strategic Interest in Importing Oil

The oil trade is much more than a simple economic transaction. Political interests, alliances, and favors all impact the availability of oil. This is clearly seen in the OPEC crisis of the 70's as well as the coalition's ability to manipulate oil prices to pressure various groups and nations⁵².

One of the reasons the United States continued (and continues) to buy Saudi oil is to ensure their allies' economic success. By continuing to maintain positive ties with the kingdom, the United States keeps the Saudi Arabian market open for their Western European (non-energy producing) allies. The

⁵⁰ "Facts and Statistics," Alberta Energy, accessed November 1, 2016. <http://www.energy.alberta.ca/Oilsands/791.asp>

⁵¹ Elena Holodny, "Saudi Arabia has some 'self-inflicted wounds' from its battle for the oil market", *Business Insider*, October 12, 2016, published April 25, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/saudi-arabia-and-oil-market-share-2016-10>

⁵² Benoit Facoun, Summer Said, and Bill Spindle, "OPEC is Ready to Rumble Over Saudi Output," *The Wall Street Journal*, published November 9, 2015, accessed November 8, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/opec-is-ready-to-rumble-over-saudi-output-1448830360>

United States can purchase sufficient quantities of crude oil from non-Gulf countries or produce its own crude oil to suit its needs. The European market, however, is far more dependent on OPEC and the Arabian Peninsula⁵³. If relationships soured between the two nations, Europe might be denied a significant portion of the market to buy oil due to their ties with the United States. This happened in the 1970's oil embargo as well for countries that shared American beliefs about Israel at the time. Due to the close political ties with the EU and its member states, the United States has a vested interest in maintaining at least some level of closeness with the Saudi government.

Europe was not America's only strategic concern. Pulling out of this relationship would have been disastrous, creating a power vacuum in an already unstable region. Rather than having a strong American presence to keep various nations from declaring war, regional powers would be more explicit in feuding for power within the region. Cutting themselves off from one of the regional leaders would have weakened America's position in the Middle East at an inopportune time. The United States military had operated bases in Saudi Arabia since 1990 with Operation Desert Shield⁵⁴. To strike against Iraq and Afghanistan, it helped to have Middle Eastern bases and allies that the U.S. could use. Ending the economic relationship at such a delicate point in the two nations' relationship could have led to the termination of these bases and thus an important point of logistical support for the military.

iii. U.S. Military Transfers to Saudi Arabia

One of the defining aspects of the U.S. - K.S.A alliance was the exchange of natural resources for security and armaments. The United States has been one of the world's largest arms exporter since the end of World War Two and Saudi Arabia was one of its many clients⁵⁵. Again, if there was a decline

⁵³ "Supplier Countries," European Commission, accessed November 2, 2016.
<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/imports-and-secure-supplies/supplier-countries>

⁵⁴ "Seabee History: Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm," The Navy Department Library, accessed November 8, 2016.
<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/s/seabee-history0/desert-shield-desert-storm.html>

⁵⁵ "10. International Arms Transfers and Arms Production," SIPRI, accessed November 9, 2016.
<https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2015/10>

in the relationship, one would expect to see a decline in arms sales to the kingdom.

This deterioration, though, is not supported by the data. While there was a decrease in arms sales in 2000 and 2001, it was not a situation unique to the American arms industry. The United Kingdom, which was the second largest exporter of arms to Saudi Arabia saw a reduction in Saudi Arabia purchases during this time frame. It does not make sense, however, to blame these cuts on the September 11th attacks as they had not happened yet. Furthermore, arms sales begin to recover slightly in 2002 and 2003. So, what are some possible explanations of this decrease in sales? Was there a decline in U.S. - Saudi relationships during this time? I would argue that there was not in fact a decline during this era and the cutbacks in arms transfer were largely a result of pragmatic assessment rather than an emotional rebuke. Saudi Arabia relies on U.S. weaponry, U.S. training and U.S. doctrine.

Furthermore, the United States helps Saudi Arabia assess its defensive and strategic needs⁵⁶. For example, if the United States determines that Saudi Arabia is weak at sea, it might recommend a new destroyer. The nation that is going to make and sell them that vessel is the United States. Thus, both nations are strongly incentivized to transfer arms. The United States (and its defense industry) want to make as much money as possible without bankrupting Saudi Arabia (as they would prefer continued purchases). Saudi Arabia wants to ensure its safety and who better to listen to than the world's largest military. One year of the Saudi government not purchasing arms does not indicate a reduction of economic ties, but rather a strategic assessment that Saudi Arabia has adequate defenses for that year. This explanation also shows why arms transfers remained relatively low compared to the peaks of the 1990's.

Table 2: By Millions of Dollars

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Belgium						1	14	14	15	47		91
Canada	57	59	28	25	23	20	6	5	5	17		245
France			5	31	36	25	7	374	29	761	1	1269
Germany (FRG)				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Italy								83		6		88
Pakistan											4	4
Switzerland	38	45	6									88
Turkey										15	8	23
United Kingdom		220	1029	630	8	35						1922
United States	889	1406	1724	2212	1512	3	33	89	117	324	153	8462
Total	984	1729	2792	2900	1580	85	61	567	167	1170	167	12201

The 1st Gulf War showed Saudi Arabia how massively unprepared it was for the war with Iraq.

⁵⁶ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, published September 20, 2016, accessed November 9 2016. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

Without U.S. aid, Saudi Arabia would have had an extremely difficult time holding off the much more populous Iraqi forces.⁵⁷ While new military technology will never be able to close the population gap between the two countries, technology can act as a force multiplier. Sometimes this multiplier means that small forces can confront and defeat much larger armies based on this technological difference. After the Gulf War, Saudi wanted these technologies and their purchases explains the massive spending in the 90's. Once Saudi Arabia was more fully modernized, they could cutback temporarily.

Another reason for this continued economic trade is the cost of ending it. Even if Saudi Arabia wanted to cut off ties with the United States and switch military systems (from U.S. to Russian), it would have an extremely difficult time transitioning. The United States weapon systems are vastly different from their Russian counterparts and each side is designed to operate and integrate only with itself (that is American with American and Russian with Russian). To switch to a new armament system, the Saudi government would be forced to completely overhaul their arms systems which they had already spent billions on.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia would also be forced spend massively if they switched systems to another NATO country's system like Britain or France. Although American weapons systems do share some similarities with NATO forces, there is no standardization within NATO. Ranging from the aircraft used to the small arms, NATO member states struggle to agree on shared armaments⁵⁸⁵⁹. In realistic terms, it just does not make sense for the Saudi government to start replacing the American system with an equal or lesser system unless the American supply of arms dried up.

⁵⁷ "Saudi Arabia," SIPRI, accessed November 9, 2016. http://fas.org/asmp/profiles/saudi_arabia.htm

⁵⁸ Barton H. Halpern, "NATO Weapons & Sensors Working Group – Emerging Technologies Session" NATO Army Armaments Group, April 5, 2015, accessed April 20, 2017. http://www.dtic.mil/ndia/2015/armament/wed17336_Halpern.pdf

⁵⁹ Per G. Arvidsson, "Weapons & Sensors" NATO Army Armaments Group, accessed April 20, 2017 <http://www.dti;c.mil/ndia/2009/infantrysmallarms/wednesdayssessionvArvidsson.pdf>

SECTION 3.3: DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL GESTURES

One of the findings of this thesis is that the American and Saudi alliance is one defined by pragmatism, rather than popularity or ideology. Economically and militarily, the two nations could cooperate as if the September 11th attacks never occurred. Politically, the two nations still managed to cooperate, but, there was hostility and infighting that are noticeably absent from the other facets of their relationship. The United States and Saudi Arabia clashed over the Palestinian-Israeli issue, Saudi continued support for extremist international Islamist groups, and heightened awareness over Saudi human and political rights violations. In most cases of these disagreements, the United States would often continue to pursue whatever policies they wanted. Occasionally, the U.S. government would make concessions to Saudi policy interests to assuage Saudi concerns, but they largely seemed like token gestures.

i. Israeli-Palestinian Disagreements

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its insurgencies and counter-insurgencies is a symbol that has taken on different meanings for different groups. For Arabs, the conflict could represent a struggle against Western imperialism and colonialism. Almost all Arabs would demonstrate support for a Palestinian state and favor it over an Israeli state. Americans in the early 2000's, conversely, largely supported Israel's right to exist and strive for either complete Israeli sovereignty or a two-state solution that allowed both states to coexist.⁶⁰

Before the Cold War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not a major point of contention, as the Saudi regime was more interested in defeating Communism and maintaining the status quo⁶¹. The Wahhabi faith is an important part of Saudi legitimacy and allowing communist (often atheist)

⁶⁰ Steven Kull, "Americans on the Israel/Palestinian Conflict: A Study of US Public Attitudes," Program on International Policy Attitudes, Maryland 2002) http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/IsPal_Conflict/IsPal_May02/IsPal_May02_rpt.pdf

⁶¹ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, published September 20, 2016, accessed November 9 2016. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

influences would undercut Saudi authority. Risking their relationship with the United States was simply not an option at this point as the fear of being invaded or overrun by USSR-supported guerillas was too great.

With the end of the Cold War, the Palestinian issue became more pertinent and U.S. - K.S.A relations deteriorated. Strategic interests began to diverge and concerns over communist uprisings vanished nearly overnight with the fall of the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia became less interested in working with the United States and more interested in becoming a regional hegemony. This struggle for independence (policy-wise), respect, and authority is largely what drove the two nations apart politically.

1. Warning from Sultan Bandar bin Sultan

American and Saudi policy directly clashed as the United States clearly favored the Israeli state with arms sales and large aid packages, while the kingdom actively called upon the United States to pursue a two-state initiative. Repeatedly, Saudi requests from the American government seemed to fall on deaf ears. Infuriated at the United States' lack of response to their Saudi allies, Crown Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, gambled the "special relationship" on American pragmatism in 2001.

Therefore, the Crown Prince will not communicate in any form, type or shape with you, and Saudi Arabia will take all its political, economic and security decisions based on how it sees its own interest in the region without taking into account American interests anymore because it is obvious that the United States has taken a strategic decision adopting Sharon's policy.⁶²

In the entirety of his message, Prince Bandar was not referring to a specific policy. Rather he argued that Bush was allowing Sharon "to determine everything in the Middle East."⁶³ This statement was highlighted by the fact that former President George W Bush often consulted with Prime Minister

⁶² Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (Simon & Schuster, New York 2006) 77.

⁶³ Ibid. 78

Sharon whilst refusing visits from the leader of the Palestinian Authority, Yasir Arafat.⁶⁴ The prince then uses specific references to illegal Israeli settlements and unfair Israeli retribution against Palestinians. With statements like these and others, Bandar implicitly says that the American president should hold the Israelis accountable rather than continuing American military aid. He then finishes his speech with the above threat to end U.S.-Saudi ties.

These threats never materialized in terms of economic and military ramifications between the September 11th attacks and the 2nd war, but this statement did define the era's political tension. It also signaled the decline of the U.S. hegemony over Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Within two days, Bandar's gamble paid off and President George W. Bush privately recognized a separate Palestinian state (an unprecedented move in American policy-making) in a letter to the ambassador. He also promised to make a similar declaration to the public on the week of September the 10th.

While the September 11th attacks eventually led to a cancellation of this public recognition, the way that the United States interacted with the Saudi state was significantly changed⁶⁵ No longer could the United States flagrantly disregard Saudi interests and expect to get away without a political reprimand or threat. Instead, the United States would be forced to cooperate and negotiate with the kingdom.

2. Beirut Summit

One crisis that shows the renewal of the United States and Saudi Arabia's restored, albeit, altered political arrangement is the 2002 Beirut Summit. The Beirut Summit was an Arab League meeting that aimed to create an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution⁶⁶. Specifically, the Arab Peace Initiative (the name of the Arab solution) asked for a renunciation of the 1967 borders, a resolution for

⁶⁴ Josh Pollack, "Saudi Arabia and the United States 1931-2002", *MERIA* 6, no. 3, (2002): pg. 77-102

⁶⁵ Woodward 78.

⁶⁶ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Arabs vs. the Abdullah Plan", *Middle East Quarterly* 17, no. 3, (2010): pg. 3-12

Palestinian refugees, and an independent Palestinian state⁶⁷.

While the Beirut Summit is often recognized for its surprising Arab recognition of Israel, its importance in United States-Saudi relations is often understated. The regent prince, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, agreed to meet with the American administration before the summit began⁶⁸. This had not been done since the September 11th attacks. Additionally, during the meeting of the Arab League, the United States made demands against the Israeli government. These demands aimed to both ensure the safety of Yasir Arafat and called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities. While Israel only complied with the first request, the fact that the American government made this political concession helps delineate the shift from a hegemon-subject role to a senior partner-junior partner relationship. Saudi Arabia was now able to alter American policy (albeit only slightly at times), rather than accepting it verbatim.

Despite this shift in politics on the executive level, American legislators and citizenry would still largely support Israeli claims and policies (especially after the September 11th attacks). This seemingly overwhelming support, however, does not tell the whole story. Increasingly, the United States government was pressuring Israel for Palestinian economic and political allowances.

While this may seem like an improvement in Saudi-American relations, it was really a major blow. Prince Bandar's political brinkmanship alarmed American policy makers. Meanwhile, Prince Bandar was annoyed that this "special relationship" seemed to be an extension of colonial era politics.

ii. Criticism of Domestic Policies

Despite this increased political tension in the Palestine-Israel conflict, American policymakers rarely criticized the Saudi Arabian government for their human rights violations. Although the two nations seemed to be growing farther apart, the United States (particularly the President) maintained its

⁶⁷ "Arab Peace Initiative: Full Text", *The Guardian*, published 28 March, 2002.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/mar/28/israel7>

⁶⁸ Pollack, pg. 88

Cold War policy largely of remaining silent on Saudi Arabian human rights violations, seemingly to preserve the relationship of the two countries.

1. **American Silence on Saudi Human Rights Violations**

Saudi Arabia is notorious for its human rights violations. From 2001-2003, Human Rights Watch listed multiple ways that the Saudi Arabia government oppressed their subjects. Whether it was religious suppression, gender inequality, or lack of political representation, Saudi Arabia flouted international rules on human rights. American policymakers, however, did not make any attempt to criticize these blatant transgressions, which was a continuation of former president Clinton's policy to not criticize the Saudi regime.

Between 9/11 and the 2nd Gulf War, there was almost no criticism of Saudi Arabia's human-rights violations from President Bush. It was primarily think-tanks and other organizations that were criticizing Saudi's record. The few times former President Bush did criticize Saudi Arabia after the beginning of the 2nd Gulf War, they were mild rebukes and quickly swept aside. In 2003 and 2005, former President Bush called for greater political freedoms as well as prison reform in Saudi Arabia⁶⁹⁷⁰. These changes were never implemented and Bush did not push for them at least in any documented fashion.

⁶⁹ Maura Reynolds, "Bush says U.S. Must Spread Democracy," *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 2003, accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bal-te.bush07nov07-story.html>

⁷⁰ "Letter to President George W. Bush Regarding Prince Abdullah's Visit to the US" Human Rights Watch, April 21, 2005. Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/english/docs/2005/04/24/saudia10529.htm>

SECTION 3.4: PUBLIC OPINION AND MEDIA EXPOSURE

An interesting characteristic of the Saudi-American alliance is that it has remained relatively elite-driven throughout the years. That is, the deals brokered between the two nations have largely been done either without the public's support or ignoring their scorn. And even though Saudi Arabia and its citizens have not enjoyed popularity with American voters, American senators and congressmen approve military sales, training, and protection of Saudi installations. Even in the face of the September 11th attacks, senators continued to approve cooperation with the Saudi government except on some issues that garnered them popular support.

i. American views on Saudi Arabia

One feature that this research hypothesized about the US-KSA relationship was a regression in public opinion despite maintaining a constant relationship in terms of military, economic, and political bonds. Polling data seems to support this theory (at least from the American side) as immediately following the September 11th attacks, the American opinion of Saudi Arabians began to shift negatively. While there are arguments as to what extent the attacks shaped public opinion (as opposed to previous relational trends beginning after the Cold War), no one denies that they influenced the way Americans viewed the Muslim World.

This change can be seen through the usage of public opinion polls. Using the data from The Gallup Poll, one can observe an increase in hostile American views towards Saudi Arabia following the September 11th terrorist attacks⁷¹. From the periods of February 2001 to April 2001, the Gallup Poll asked, "Is your overall opinion of each of the following countries very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?⁷²" The United States respondents answered that question with

⁷¹ George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 2001*, (Scholarly Resources Inc., Delaware, 2002) 43.

⁷² Ibid. 43

47% very or mostly favorably, 7% had no opinion, and 46% responded in the negative⁷³.

In February 2002, Gallup asked the same question to Americans and the results were decidedly different. The second poll showed a strongly unfavorable American view against Saudi Arabia. In this poll, 27% of Americans held favorable views on Saudi Arabia, 9% had no opinion, while 64% of them held unfavorable views. This 37% difference supports the idea that there was in fact a decline in American opinion (which was previously 1% favorable) towards Saudi-Arabia following the September 11th attacks. Some theories surrounding this dramatic decline is the 9/11 attackers' association to Saudi Arabia as well as Osama bin Laden's family ties in the kingdom⁷⁴.

Interestingly, another survey also conducted by the Gallup poll provided a slightly more nuanced view on American perception of Saudi Arabia. In an interview conducted in March 2002, the Gallup Poll asked Americans, "As I read off the names of some nations, one at a time, would you tell me whether your opinion of that nation is somewhat favorable, neither favorable or unfavorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?"⁷⁵ It is interesting to note here that the respondents were not explicitly given this option of neutrality in the earlier polls.

Although unfavorable remains high, the neutral option immediately jumps to 20% at the expense of all the other options. In this poll, 23% of Americans responded favorably, 4% had no opinion, 20% were neutral, and 53% responded unfavorably⁷⁶. It seems that 9/11 attacks created primarily created uncertainty, rather than hatred. If there was truly a widespread rejection of Saudi Arabia, one would expect a larger increase in negative scores, rather than just an uptick in neutrality - that was not even surveyed before! - and a fall in favored opinions. This third poll reflects a more nuanced answer to the third poll.

⁷³ Ibid. 44

⁷⁴ George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 2002*, (Scholarly Resources Inc., Delaware, 2003), 54

⁷⁵ Ibid. 55.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 55.

	Question Asked	Positive	No Opinion	Neutral	Negative	Net Score
April 2001 (Pre-9-11)	Is your overall opinion of each of the following countries very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?	47.00%	7.00%	*	46.00%	1.00%
February 2002	Is your overall opinion of each of the following countries very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?	27.00%	9.00%	*	64.00%	-37.00%
March 2002	As I read off the names of some nations, one at a time, would you tell me whether your opinion of that nation is somewhat favorable, neither favorable or unfavorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?	23.00%	4.00%	20.00%	53.00%	-30.00%

* = No Option in Poll

This information is important as this uncertainty and distrust begins to sow the seeds for a change in the American-Saudi relation. Before the September 11th attacks, Saudi Arabia and the United States had a long-lasting relationship that was relatively unaffected by the people living in their respective countries. Rather as seen in the previous section, elite level communication was typically the main way the two nations accomplished negotiations.

After 9/11, however, all this change and the American-Saudi relationship came under more intense scrutiny.⁷⁷ Former government officials came out questioning the relationship as did members of think-tanks. Saudi Arabian officials also mentioned that they felt that there was a real attempt by Americans to go after Saudi Arabia for its alleged connection to the attacks⁷⁸. Without this shift in public support, one would probably not see an increase in congressional interest in Saudi Arabia. This would lead to an intelligence reform in 2004, which forced the President to create a committee to

⁷⁷ *All Things Considered*, "Analysis: Controversy Surrounding U.S. Relations With Saudi Arabia", Margot Adler, NPR, August 13, 2002. <http://www.npr.org/programs/atc/transcripts/2002/aug/020813.ohara.html>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

ensure Saudi cooperation with intelligence gathering and warfighting.⁷⁹ This scrutiny has continued to modern day relationships and continues to put stress on the relationship.

ii. Saudi views on Americans

While public opinion data on Americans was not collected in pre-9/11 Saudi Arabia, there are still some indicators of the Saudi view towards the American government and its citizens. The way Saudi newspapers and magazines write for Arabic subjects is different than the way Saudi newspapers written in English for expatriates read. Oftentimes, the English newspapers were less harsh than their Arab counterparts. Another important part of discovering data this way is that there are limitations when working on Saudi Arabian media. Saudi Arabian media is heavily censored and controlled by the Saudi government. Organizations like Freedom House and Reporters without Borders often rank it in the bottom ten or twenty nations in the world for freedom of press. Therefore, it is very possible that the range of opinions presented in these newspapers are more representative of different stances on the party/government line than peoples' actual thoughts and opinions. Due to the lack of availability of data and the nation's strict control of national borders this is one of the limitations that this paper has that cannot be corrected.

Despite these limitations, however, there is still much to be learned. Of the newspapers surveyed, which were translated from Arabic, most of them seemed to share a common theme of sympathy and a plea to be tolerant and peaceful after the attacks. Many examples of this are in *Al-Riyadh*, a newspaper produced in Riyadh and known for its pro-government tendencies. For example, in one article published entitled “The Weakness of Strength and the Strength of Weakness” says it understand American pain and suffering. They too mourn for the loss of innocent. This article, however, also warns of America becoming too aggressive and pleads for them to try and address the

⁷⁹ Nino P. Tollitz, *Saudi Arabia: Terrorism, U.S. Relations and Oil*, Nova Science Publishers Inc., June 2, 2006, April 25, 2017.

root causes of terrorism and improve the world. Furthermore, this article warns against a growing militarization movement and the impossibility of running a country in a state of fear forever⁸⁰ Another called, “The Battle Against Racism and Terrorism” again expresses sympathies for the lives of those lost in the attacks, but also asks for the protections of Arabs due to the presence of Israeli lobbyists in Congress. The author fears both unnecessary invasions of developing nations with Arabs as well as the mistreatment of Arabs within the American border⁸¹.

Finally, the last article from *Al-Riyadh* called “America and the Eye of the Lion” is the most antagonistic of all the articles. Firstly, its title is a reference to a Persian fable which concludes with the lesson, “In dispute, do not look down on an insignificant enemy, for even a mosquito can make the lion’s eye bleed.”⁸² Rather than being overly sympathetic, he refers to America as a powerful lion who got its proper comeuppance for overlooking the weak and unfortunate. To deal with these mosquitos, claims the author, America must stop supporting the “illegitimacy” of Israel as well as provide aid to those left behind by globalization⁸³.

Interestingly, two out of these three articles explicitly linked the September 11th attacks to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. Due to this newspaper’s close affiliation with the government, it makes sense for them to push the Palestinian-Israeli issue as it was an important issue for them as outlined in Section 3.3. Investigating even further, one can see that this was common across many different sources. Looking at newspapers like *Okaz*, *Al-Watan*, *Al-Hayat*, and *Al-Medina*, one can see that many different writers explicitly linked the September 11th attacks to the Palestinian issue. One study shows

⁸⁰ Yousef Al-Kweelet, “The Weakness of Strength and the Strength of Weakness,” *Al-Riyadh*, September 16, 2001. Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.alriyadh.com/31301> Translated by Andrew Czuzak

⁸¹ Salem Al-Ghamdi, “The Battle Against Racism and Terrorism,” *Al-Riyadh*, September 16, 2001. Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.alriyadh.com/31302> Translated by Andrew Czuzak

⁸² Ali bin Ubayda al-Rayhani, *Persian Wisdom in Arab Garb*, Library of Congress, 2006, Accessed April 25, 2017. Pg 263 https://books.google.com/books?id=s4ItDgAAQBAJ&pg=PA263&lpg=PA263&dq=mosquito+and+the+lion+arab+story&source=bl&ots=tleG2FsQeQ&sig=aKe8ea683e6xFK8qfz39B19h_S4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEWij6_udtb_TAHWq7IMKHcBfAj0Q6AEILjAB#v=onepage&q=mosquito%20and%20the%20lion%20arab%20story&f=false

⁸³ Khaled Abdul Wahid Hamid, “America and the Eyeball of the Lion,” *Al-Riyadh*, September 15, 2001. Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.alriyadh.com/31314>

that out of four hundred and thirty-one articles published from September 12th to December 12th relating to the September 11th attacks, one hundred and twenty-three of them related it to the Palestinian issue.⁸⁴

These articles are interesting because it shows the stances the Saudi government allowed in response to the September 11th attacks. While there was sympathy and reassurances offered to the United States, it seems that the Saudi Arabian government and institutions did not believe that their relationship with the United States was in danger, or that Americans would not bother to look at these newspapers. In such a sensitive time, it seems odd for Saudi Arabia to print these articles, as some of these pieces were rather callous calls to action in the face of thousands of Americans dying. Saudi Arabia, however, faced no repercussions for any of these articles and it seemed like the Saudi media coverage had very little impact on their relationship between the United States.

⁸⁴ Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Arfaj, "How Saudi Arabian Newspapers Depicted the September 11th Attacks," University of Birmingham, 2013, accessed April 25, 2017. <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/4289/1/Alarfaj13PhD.pdf>

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This thesis finds that of the four aspects studied (military alliances, economic agreements, diplomatic ties, and public opinion), only three of the four facets seemed to impact U.S.-Saudi relations. As hypothesized, the “pragmatic” ties, trade agreements and strategic cooperation, played important factors in the relationship. This makes sense as, since its inception in 1944, the relationship has largely been based on the exchange of Saudi Arabian oil in exchange for American armaments that would bolster Saudi Arabian defenses as well as promote Saudi interests in the region.

While some of the external pressures may have changed, such as the American relationship with Israel and the existence of the Soviet Union, the relationship largely remains based on this exchange. Saudi has exported large amounts of oil to the United States for relatively low prices in exchange for advanced military technologies and training Saudi Arabians do not have the capacity to produce.

Conversely, as demonstrated in my thesis through qualitative analysis of media pieces, military documents, and NGOs reports, the rhetoric performed by the respective leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United States about the other plays little to no effect. There were very little public denunciations from either side regarding the other before the September 11th attacks and that policy continued, even in the face of gross human rights violations. Instead, reports from journalists, like Bob Woodward, and leaked letters showed that leaders preferred to settle their differences behind closed doors or with private communiques. As demonstrated in Chapter 3.4, in the few instances where one leader spoke out about the other, very little fallout seemed to occur and the event was quickly moved past.

One of the surprising finds of this thesis is that public opinion did influence the American-Saudi alliance. Contrary to my hypothesis, the American public's ability to influence elections drew senators and congressmen to their cause. This created a strain on the relationship because before the September 11th attacks, the relationship was maintained between elite executives only. Whereas past problems

could be solved by the aforementioned private relationships and messages, Congress prolonged conflicts between the executive-level actors, increasing tension and damaging the relationship.

Tension between Saudi Arabia, Congress, and the president culminated in 2016, when President Obama attempted to protect Saudi Arabia by vetoing JASTA (Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act). JASTA would allow families of September 11th victims to sue Saudi Arabia for its alleged role in the 9/11 attacks. The Saudi government responded by threatening to sell “\$750 billion in treasury securities and other assets.”⁸⁵ While nothing has happened to date regarding this threat, it still shows a new interesting dynamic where the two heads of state tried to protect their relationship from legislative representatives.

In further research, it would be interesting to see the levels of congressional interference in the U.S.-Saudi relationships since the Second Gulf War. It is interesting because it seems that even as members of Congress routinely criticize Saudi Arabia for its human rights violations (since 2003), they continue to allow the sale of American armaments to them. Regardless, this is research for another time.

While the relationship remained relatively constant from 1944 to 2001, the period between 9/11 and the Second Gulf War is an important time to investigate. This period reveals which aspects of American foreign policy-making are most important to the executive branch and which Congress values more. Most importantly, however, in researching a changing relationship, this thesis demonstrates the dynamic of new actors, the American public and Congress, and the ways they can change the relationships between the United States and other nations.

⁸⁵ Mark Mazzetti, “Saudi Arabia Warns of Economic Fallout if Congress Passes 9/11 Bill,” *New York Times*, April 15 2016, accessed April 21 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/16/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-warns-ofeconomic-fallout-if-congress-passes-9-11-bill.html?_r=0

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