Subaltern Realism, Saudi Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The study has three main aims: the discovery of the historical Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict, an analysis of how far internal and external factors influence this foreign policy and the extent to which the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia can be explained by using a Subaltern Realism perspective. The study uses a case study research methodology, with the use of a secondary source analysis of official studies into Saudi foreign policy as the main form of research data. The results of the study found that there were internal and external factors that impacted tremendously upon Saudi foreign policy, underlining the developing nation status that is central to the Subaltern Realism perspective. The analysis shows that there is tension between the individual groups in Saudi society and the foreign policy that has developed. The relationship with the US has perhaps historically been the most dominant external influence on the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy, with it often siding with peace in the region rather than the destruction of Israel. However, in recent years, the influence of internal groups has increased and the relative power and roles of the Ulama, liberals and Islamists have been vital in the development of foreign policy that has sought to become more independent of the US, as the country has become more confident in its position. The study concludes that the Subaltern realist perspective (although it has its limitations) is a far more effective way of identifying the impact that internal and external factors have on the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy, than previous studies based upon a more traditional form of Realism. This study finds that the importance of domestic groups such as the Ulama, the Royal Family, liberal and the growing religious extremists have a determining influence on the development of foreign policy and, further, that the relative power that each has at any given time leads to the increase or decrease of the influence of international factors respectively. Overall, this research shows that the Arab-Israeli Conflict has had wide and important implications for the Saudi decision-making process because it is an issue that draws together and involves all of the many, complex and multi-faceted external and internal factors that impact on Saudi foreign policy decisions. The conclusion draws out the implications of this research and outlines some further recommendations for study.
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<td>AIPAC</td>
<td>American Israel Public Affairs Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPVPV</td>
<td>Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<td>FDR</td>
<td>Franklin Delano Roosevelt</td>
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<td>G-77</td>
<td>Group of 77</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>IJMES</td>
<td>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle Eastern and North Africa</td>
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<td>MOFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organisation</td>
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<td>PR</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>Saudi Foreign Policy</td>
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<td>SJA</td>
<td>Saudi Journalist Association</td>
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<td>SPI</td>
<td>Saudi Peace Initiative</td>
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Subaltern Realism, Saudi Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Introduction

The field of International Relations is one that has come to be dominated by the theory of Realism over the past half century. Recent commentary on the theory is that the Realism is not only associated with “political thinkers and academics but also with practical policy makers, diplomats and journalists and the arguments concerning its dominance focus upon the hold that it has, and has had over all such people as they interpret and act in the global sphere.”1 This comment from the last decade underlines how there has been criticism recently of the role that the theory of Realism assumes in the discussion of International Relations, global development and the rise and fall of nation states and other organisations in the world community. This type of criticism has led to the growth of other possible theories, both based within the realist field as well as outside of it, to help account for specific development in this increasingly complex and multifaceted international society.

One significant variant of the realist tradition to arise in recent years is that of the theory of Subaltern Realism, as proposed by Mohammed Ayoob.2 The assessment by Ayoob that the use of dominant International Relations (IR) theory (such as Realism) present inequalities in its consideration of the majority of global state actors is one that has gained traction through its brief history. Ayoob has argued that all of the assumptions made in Classical Realism, liberalism and other mainstream theories have now come to be known as truths and at the same time most of current International Relations theory has been dominated by western scholars, Thus, ‘all of the contesting truth claims have one thing in common: they privilege the experiences, interests and contemporary dilemmas of a certain portion of the society of states at the expense of the experiences, interests, and contemporary dilemmas of the large majority of states.’3 Ayoob’s contention here is that the dominant state actors (United States, United Kingdom, Germany and other key developed countries) have created IR theory and shaped it to suit their situation, whereas the majority of the world’s state actors do not fit into this mould. Consequently, Ayoob developed the Subaltern realist perspective in an attempt and re-cast the theory of Realism to better understand and align more suitably with the perspectives and circumstances of these developing nations in a post-colonial society. This work posits that the Saudi Arabian foreign policy can be better understood using Ayoob’s theory, rather than traditional theories that have come to dominate IR theory and thinking.

This introductory chapter aims to present a top-down analysis of the current situation regarding the knowledge of Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, outlining the reasons why a new approach (using

3 Ibid. p.29.
Subaltern realist theory) is necessary to provide a new and enhanced understanding of the reasons for specific decisions regarding the foreign policy in a historical context. Having presented an introduction to the subject, it is important to first outline why this topic is of interest with the provision of a history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and a discussion of its wider international importance, followed by a brief review of the existing literature on the Saudi Arabian foreign policy, highlighting the current gaps in understanding. Following this, it is necessary to provide an overview of International Relations theory, focussing on the dominance of Realism and also emphasising its key limitations in relation to the foreign policy of a developing world nation such as Saudi Arabia. This enables the introduction of the theory of Subaltern Realism as a possible method of gaining a greater understanding of the subject before outlining the research methodology, research aims and questions that have been designed for this study.

**Brief History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

Saudi Arabia foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict is complex and has changed considerably with the growing influence of the US as an ally. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been on-going for the majority of the 20th and 21st centuries, with the position of Israel as a nation state in the Middle East at the heart of the hostilities. The roots of the current conflict are fixed with the creation of the modern state of Israel, with the majority of the fighting and hatred developing after the state was created shortly after the Second World War. Bickerton’s work on the subject underlines the important role that external powers such as the United Kingdom and United States had in the development of this problem, particularly with their insistence that the country of Israel should be created in the region following the atrocities faced by Jewish people during the Second World War. However, the conflict began prior to this period and has its initial roots even before the First World War. Bickerton claims that ‘the Arab-Israeli conflict is a touchstone for the 20th and 21st centuries. It spans World War I and World War II, the Cold War, and the War on Terror, and many nations have been touched at least indirectly by some aspect of the dispute.’ Furthermore, ‘since 1919, the British mandate of Palestine – which created the international legal framework for the establishment of a Jewish state, Israel, against the wishes of the predominantly but far from exclusively Muslim local population, (has triggered) a conflict that continues to the present.’ The widespread nature of the conflict has developed along both religious and ethnic lines, with the majority of the Arab world opposed to what they perceive to be the illegal occupation of part of their territory, highlighting the central involvement of Saudi Arabia in the conflict and the need for this current study.

Saudi foreign policy with regard to Israel has changed little over the past eight decades; however, the following brief assessment of the Arab-Israeli conflict outlines the major developments that have taken place since the end

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5 Ibid p. 8
of the Second World War. On November 29, 1947, the newly formed United Nations approved the UN Partition Plan (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181). This plan proposed to divide the country into two states, an Arab and a Jewish state, with Jerusalem designated an ‘international city’ and administered by the UN. The introduction of the state of Israel has led to conflict ever since, including the Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Ever since these events, the situation has been extremely fragile, with Saudi Arabia taking up an increasingly important role in the conflict. The power and wealth of Saudi Arabia, combined with the relationship that it has developed with other Arab countries as well as the United States, has meant that currently its position is dominant in the region. The conflict would be critical in any geographic area of the world, with two communities of people constantly waging war against the other. However, the position of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East has led to increased instability in a region that is no stranger to turmoil, constantly throwing fresh doubt on the ability of the region to ever secure a lasting peace.

Saul Cohen, focusing on the period shortly after the two major wars (Six Day War and Yom Kippur War), underlines that the Arab-Israeli conflict is one that will be long lasting with no easy resolution involved. This underlines the importance of studying the role that Saudi Arabian foreign policy has played in the conflict and will continue to have in the future, particularly because of Saudi Arabia’s position as one of the two largest countries (and certainly most powerful) in the Middle East. Cohen states that the ‘shatterbelt characteristics of the Middle East belie the hope that the resolution of any single issue or conflict will assure regional harmony and stability.’

His discussion and definition of the shatterbelt situation depicts it as one that ‘is internally fragmented and subject to continuing external pressure by major powers because of its unique geographical, resource, cultural and historical conditions.’ The Arab-Israeli conflict is thus one of the most complex and multifaceted conflicts of the modern era, with a range of issues impacting upon its development. In this manner, the conflict seems to dominate Middle Eastern politics, and this complexity has been increased due to the changes involved in the main actors’ attitudes and way they view the conflict.

One motivation for this research is that many studies tend to simplify the situation, depicting all Arab states as simply opposed to the state of Israel and not giving sufficient attention to the nuanced efforts by many countries to develop peace in the region. Hudson, for example, argues that that this is an ineffective and dangerous way of looking at the conflict, with the view that there is danger in ‘looking at the region as if its main conflict patterns and protagonists have remained unchanged over the years.’ Moreover, the same study underlines the ways that actors have changed their views with the period after the Six Day War leading to potential peace treaties.

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7 Ibid.
diplomatic relations changing, and mutual investments and economic relations creating partnerships in the region. In other words, the conflict is one that has remained fluid since the 1940s, yet there are studies that fail to recognise this, attempting to simplify a complex conflict. This section has provided a brief overview of the Arab-Israeli conflict, placing it into the wider Arab-Israeli conflict while also underlining the importance of Saudi Arabia’s position in the conflict. The foreign policy of specific countries can change towards the conflict over a long period of time. In this respect, it is important to present a review of the literature on the subject of Saudi foreign policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Review of the Literature on Saudi Foreign Policy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

One of the most recent and seminal works on the subject has been conducted by Cordesman. His work has identified the nature of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy as global society moves forward in the 21st century. Cordesman argues the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia must ‘deal with a wide range of potential foreign threats and foreign policy problems and with a small, violent internal Islamic extremist minority that commits acts of foreign and domestic terrorism.’ Cordesman presents a suitable analysis of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, with his study also rightly noting that ‘Saudi Arabia faces foreign as well as domestic challenges and the political and religious character of Saudi history will do much to determine how well it can meet this mix of challenges.’ In this way, Cordesman approaches the subject in an appropriate manner, by highlighting the key factors that influence the decision-making of the Saudi government in relation to its foreign policy in the region. However, his work does not focus on presenting a critical analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict from a historical perspective.

There are other studies that have been conducted by respected authors and commentators on the situation concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict in recent years. Key here is the work of Fred Halliday. Halliday has underlined that there is instability of the analysis of the region and that this ‘stems from the fact that it wanders from assessing an all-powerful state to unease about whether, in such radically contrasted countries as Saudi Arabia and Iran, it makes sense to talk of a state at all.’ Halliday’s work is complex and multifaceted. He details the actions taken by the Saudi Arabian government during the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, because his focus is on the Arab-Israeli conflict from all angles, there is not a great amount of in-depth analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy itself and how it has been impacted during the conflict. There have been studies that focus on the nature of Saudi foreign policy during the conflict, but these have been theoretically underdeveloped. This study seeks to address this deficiency by offering an assessment within the framework of the Subaltern realist

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10 Ibid.

perspective, hopefully ensuring that the topic gets the coverage that it deserves as a key factor in the overall security of the Middle East. The acknowledgement that there are gaps in understanding, and that works by commentators such as Halliday have pointed out that there are multiple complications that exist in the region, means that there is a need to further analyse the situation in Saudi Arabia. However, as will be seen from the next section, the traditional and dominant International Relations theories that rely on the concept of Realism are not able to necessarily cover all areas of discussion because they do not take into account the concept of how developing nations are impacted by both domestic and external factors.

The assessments by Halliday and Cordesman are generally exceptions rather than signs of a far wider and more detailed analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The literature on the theoretical development of Saudi foreign policy is sparse. Citino, for example, examines the Saudi pursuit of economic interests via the evolution of its oil-export policy as an indicator of policy priorities. The 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Arab oil embargo against Israel’s supporters, formation of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Saudi willingness to sacrifice its own revenue-generating interests to the interests of other Arab states, especially non-oil producing Arab states, led Citino to conclude that Saudi Arabia was willing to use its economic resources to put pressure on key actors in pursuit of Riyadh’s political, extra-national and pan-Arab objectives although this imposed economic and diplomatic costs. Cordesman echoes the Subaltern realist framework in analysing Saudi Arabia’s strategic, political, economic and military decisions although he does not explicitly refer to the model as his paradigmatic framework. He has examined internal stability and security, social and demographic trends, focusing on the rise of Islamist extremism. He then investigated changes underway in the Saudi oil economy, the challenges of parallel nationalisation and privatisation, changes in trade patterns, and the new emphasis on foreign investment. On the basis of these analyses, Cordesman inferred possible future decisions regarding foreign and trade policies of several external actors towards Saudi Arabia. He predicts possible policy shifts towards Saudi Arabia by a number of its key interlocutors, but does not explain how these fundamental shifts will be achieved and does not provide an evaluation for those dimensions. Cordesman rightly notes that it is important to ‘understand that in most cases there is no one valid solution to such problems. It is all too easy to write summary conclusions. In the real world, however, little is simple and nations must cope with the full complexity of issues they face.’ Cordesman’s work, certainly details Saudi Arabian foreign policy in its most advanced stage, but even this is not effective enough, considering the types of internal and external factors that impact on the foreign policy of the country, not least because of its position as a nation in the developing world.

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14 Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.
Overall, the theoretical-informed literature on Saudi foreign policy can be more accurately described as case studies that describe the history and context of Saudi foreign policy decisions. This is not to say that these works are not critical in their contribution to the field, quite the opposite, since they provide crucial information for those academics that may then wish to place that information within a broader theoretical explanation of foreign policy. Ayoob, the original Subaltern realist, emphasises the need to understand fully the historical contexts of how states in the developing world have emerged and transformed, in order to successfully examine their foreign policy decisions. This leads to the more general point that the whole point of developing theories of International Relations is to allow for a greater understanding of how and why states behave in the way they do in order to help policymakers in their decision-making especially in terms of conflict and peace. The bulk of analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict lacks any form of theoretical framework hence the development of this study.

**Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations Theory**

Attempts to explain foreign policy behaviour have traditionally fallen within the sphere of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), as distinct from general theories of International Relations. Because FPA focuses on decision-making processes, it is an actor-focused approach. By limiting its focus to specific actors, it sidesteps the structure/agency problem of the broader International Relations field. Given that it does not get bogged down in wider contextual issues, FPA tends to be situated more within the realist school of International Relations theory, as opposed to liberal or functionalist theories.

More recently the concept of FPA has undergone transformation, with scholars such as Anders Wivel arguing that the concept of Realism within foreign policy analysis has its serious limitations. His work outlines that Realism faces two major challenges and obstacles when trying to explain foreign policy. The first is that there is a tendency to ‘combine structural factors with other variables without ending up with a collection of ad hoc arguments.’ Additionally, he notes the ‘continued importance of materialist factors such as power with the observation that these factors are interpreted and perceived — not objectively measured — by human beings making foreign policy.’ The understanding of Realism as a key to FPA but that there are problems associated with it nonetheless help to outlines that it is necessary to conduct an analysis of International Relations theory. This analysis in the

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19 Ibid. p. 355.
next section aims to locate Realism within this wider field and emphasising how it has been used by theorists and commentators to help explain the development of FPA within International Relations theory more generally.

**Realist political theory**

For decades, International Relations has been dominated by debate between different perspectives about explaining states behaviour and constructing a general theory of international politics. The central argument between scholars is on how states do interact, explaining the behaviour of individual states and how to identify what states try to achieve in the international realm and when it is possible to achieve it.

Realism advances the idea that states are essentially competitive and self-interested. Rather than attempting to build a political programme around notions of morality or adhering strictly to a particular set of ideological tenets, realists are of the view that politicians are more concerned with stability and maintaining a state’s security than other factors. In short, states consistently endeavour to promote their own national self-interest wherever possible.

The concept of Realism is arguably not in itself a theory of foreign policy but that it can point to what a related theory of foreign policy might look like. Within this, it is important to assess how Realism has impacted upon how foreign policy is viewed by the wider literature on the subject. Given the view of the state as a means by which to maintain security and compete for resources and services with others, a state’s foreign policy will be determined by both domestic and international factors; theories of foreign policy, as a corollary of this, seek to account for inter-state relations by ‘seeking to explain what states try to achieve in the external realm and when they try to achieve it’.

Rose posits four theories of foreign policy comprising what he calls *innenpolitik* and three kinds of realism. For Rose, the concept of *innenpolitik* is connected to any kind of foreign policy that is based primarily on internal factors, including liberalism. The strand within the realist theory of International Relations that best accounts for the role of domestic factors in terms of influencing foreign policy is neoclassical realism. For Rose, neoclassical realism,

… explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be

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21 Ibid. p.146.
translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical. 

Neoclassical realism emphasises that relative material power is the source of a country’s foreign policy. Accordingly, a state’s domestic and international policies are best understood as directly influenced by the interests, pursuits and strategies of the most influential domestic political forces with the most significant of external factors determining a state’s foreign policy being that of ‘relative material power’ or the power analysis of state and society and how these groups interact with one another. Interactions between the greatest external power and the most powerful domestic political, economic, social and military tendencies will constitute the major determinants of foreign policy. Neorealist models posit that those forces, which wield the greatest influence over the leadership, will shape foreign policy. These forces do not necessarily have to constitute a political group made up of individuals united by a common ideology, such as the Saudi Ulama or a trade union movement in a socialist state. The pursuit of economic interests can act as an influencing force. The pursuit of political objectives on the other hand, is inherently tied to power, thus underscoring the importance of relative power.

It must also be noted that rather than simply being influenced by domestic and international realities, the way in which states act can also be heavily influenced by the perception of other states’ interests, potency and ambitions. So this view, while holding true to the realist concept of balance of power, further adds that states’ mistrust and inability to perceive one another accurately, or state leaders’ inability to mobilise state power and public support, can cause significant alterations in foreign policy. All the while it is still accepted that domestic pressures continue to have a bearing on any decisions taken at the elite level.

The study of the theory of foreign policy can be understood as the primary focus of the realist theory of International Relations or domestic politics. However, some Neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz have argued against the possibility of establishing a coherent theoretical account of foreign policy, due to the fact that both domestic and international forces influence foreign policy. Waltz argues that theories ‘must deal with the coherent logic of autonomous realms.’ Waltz’s arguments in favour of analysis and contextual accounts, rather than the presentation of fully formed theories, have gained considerable influence. Consequently, studies of foreign policy, though approached from the theoretical framework of Realism, have tended to focus on the range of external

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23 Ibid. p. 146.
24 Ibid. p. 148.
factors that can account for the state-actor’s pursuit of power or political self-interest.\textsuperscript{27}

In essence this view forwards the thesis that the world exists in what may be described as a state of perpetual international anarchy. That is, whilst in domestic nation-states there is an inherent order, usually though not always based on hierarchy, the international environment displays no such stability. Within a nation’s borders the state acts as a central authority. The lack of an equivalent enforcer in the international sphere means that states must act in a way that ensures their security above all, or else risk their economic or military prosperity. It is irrelevant whether democracies are engaging with other democracies or with authoritarian dictatorships, since this is equally true of any goings on in foreign affairs.

It is widely claimed that realist political theory has its roots in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, who, in his seminal work \textit{The Prince}, stated that in politics ‘it must need to be taken for granted that all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers’.\textsuperscript{28} Machiavelli’s view that human nature is power-hungry and morally ambiguous has significantly influenced Realism and its approach to politics and International Relations. Realists, who assert the necessity for ‘an alternative moral code for state leaders,’\textsuperscript{29} reject the notion of a higher code of ethics, or universal morals, to which political leadership is bound. Realists claim state leaders will primarily act according to national self-interest in order to maintain power and control, rather than be guided by ideas of morality, even where the guiding moral framework that society is purported to be organised around a religious one.\textsuperscript{30} The realist perspective of politics predominated in International Relations theory and study of foreign policy throughout the twentieth century. Although consensus among eminent theorists within this school of thought has not been constant, ‘realists are unanimous in holding that human nature contains an ineradicable core of egoistic passions, that these passions define the central problems of politics and that statesmanship is dominated by the need to control this side of human nature’.\textsuperscript{31}

The realist approach to morality is rooted in the anarchic view of the international political system, which asserts that in the absence of an international system of governance to whose rules all sovereign governments are beholden, a state of anarchy exists. There is no one in power, and so, independent states are guided purely by self-interested strategies in which consolidating power and control are the ultimate objectives.\textsuperscript{32} The anarchic view of International Relations, within the realist perspective, is one of the primary focuses of Kenneth Waltz, a prominent realist theorist. He asserted that a state of anarchy exists in international politics due to the absence of a legitimate international authority that can exercise meaningful constraints over the behaviour of and relations between


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
different sovereign states. This anarchic international environment gives rise to specific political necessities for survival, such as an individualist, self-interested conception of politics, whereby the political leadership’s actions are guided solely by the quest for power and control, and motivated solely by the logic of advancing the nation-state’s (or political elite’s) self-interest. Here, the egoism that Realism posits at the core of human nature intersects with the anarchy of International Relations, resulting in ‘the overriding role of power in International Relations.’ Hobbes’ state of nature is an important backdrop, in which human nature is described as ‘nasty, brutish and short’ in the absence of authoritative, legitimate leadership. Hobbes argues that justice and morality cannot exist without an overarching international authority that can legislate codes of conduct, as encapsulated in the statement that ‘Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. If there be no power erected or not great enough for our security; every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men.’

Hans Morgenthau, another key architect of realist theory, draws no distinction between the ways in which politics operates between and within states. Though Realism is commonly associated with international, rather than domestic, relations, Morgenthau emphasises the relevance of the state of anarchy in the domestic sphere. This makes Realism an important framework for the analysis of both domestic and foreign policy, particularly in the context present in the case study, in which several conflicting sources of pressure play a significant role in the determining foreign policy. Under a realist understanding of either domestic or foreign policy, the actions and strategies of leaders (in Saudi Arabia, the monarchy and the religious elite) are motivated purely by the aim of maximising power and control.

Morgenthau defines politics as the ‘struggle for power over men,’ in which the innate human drive for power and political control, at the expense of morality if necessary, is the core motivation. However, this does not mean there is no place for reason or morality in Realism. Rather, these virtues become tools with which to legitimise and consolidate political power. Cozette cites Morgenthau, ‘the simple philosophy of the moral crusade is useful and even indispensable for the domestic task of marshalling public opinion behind a given policy.’ Ideology including religion serves a similar instrumentalist function, allowing leaders to harness support with appeals to values or perceptions held dear by the public. In this way, otherwise distasteful actions or allegiances will not just

38 K Monroe. *Contemporary Empirical Political Theory*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), Chapters 1, 2 and 5.
be justified to the public, but gain support.\textsuperscript{40}

Thus, self-interested action can be presented and justified as an appeal to reason and morality. With the present case study, such a framework can only go so far in explaining relationships such as the alliance with the United States whose political system, social values and religious principles are largely antithetical to those of Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{41} Orthodox Realism does not address certain important aspects arising out of the developmental disparity between the two states, enabling the need for a different theory that does allow for these features. Saudi Arabia’s strong ties to the USA generate many political, military and economic benefits to Saudi national interest, and are justified accordingly. Saudi Arabia’s oil wealth, the state’s primary source of revenue, has made it in the national interest, and therefore conceptualised as permissible within Islamic doctrine, for diplomatic relations to be established with many international customers for oil, such as those in South Asia, Western Europe and Japan. Also, Saudi Arabia imports myriad consumer goods from Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy and France. Countries such as India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have also supplied thousands of foreign labourers to the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{42}

Overall then, Realism proffers the view that political elites operate in national self-interest at any given time, whether in their dealings with foreign states or when devising domestic policy. Though this at least presents the façade of an amoral approach to policy-making, with security and stability deemed the most crucial concerns of all, it is possible to make the case that in promoting the national self-interest in this way politicians are indeed pursuing the most moral course of action available to them. After all, the Saudi case demonstrates that significant wealth and a range of goods and services can be provided for the population by employing such an approach.

Furthermore, realist political theory employs a Weberian conception of the state and institutions within it, emphasising the political elite’s power and control. Weber argued that the effective, strong state is one that ‘successfully upholds a claim on the legitimate use of violence in the enforcement of its order’.\textsuperscript{43} This is dependent on effective processes of nation building, as well as an acceptable level of security being provided. Furthermore, this depends on the political leadership having attained legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the domestic citizenry. At this point, with reference to the case study of Saudi Arabia elaborated below, it is noted that the notion of political legitimacy and authority can be credibly accounted for outside of the Western paradigmatic framework of a liberal democracy. After all, amongst a devoutly religious society such as that found in Saudi Arabia, the source of the monarchy’s political legitimacy lies in the divine sanction of religion, in which the sacred

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
laws of Islamic Sharia constitute the system of governance.

The Saudi Arabian monarchy or the Al-Saud family, who established the country in 1932, rules within a system of conservative Islam in which church and state are unified. Consequently, prominent religious scholars, the Ulama, play a crucial political role, second only to the Al-Saud family in terms of political authority. The interdependency between the Ulama and Al Saud originated in the eighteenth century and helped to provide the dynasty with its primary source of legitimacy. This was aided through the religious and political ties between the two. The structure of Saudi Arabia’s government, and the significant influence played by Ulama, will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two.

A critique of established paradigms

The concept of power, presented by Realism, is a set of western beliefs and assumptions with little apparent reference to the reality of the Third World ‘developing countries’. As Neuman argues, International Relations theories still suffer from a conceptual oddness when studying the Third World and the fundamental assumption of the theories such as sovereignty, the nature of anarchy, the state, rational choice and the international system that do not necessarily contribute to the reality studied. Ayoob has also pointed out that the main theories of International Relations ‘at the present’, including Classical Realism, Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism, have failed in the basic test of applicability, since these theories are based on the West and do not consider the behaviour of the majority of states in the international system. However, after briefly showing how Realism does not take into account the different levels of developments in the international system, this study identifies frameworks designed with ‘Less Developed Countries’ specificities in mind, and which have been used to examine the experience of these countries. Saudi Arabia’s neighbours display variations in historical experience, state organising principles, affiliation to the Pan-Arabic notion of ethnic fraternity, resource-based economic differentials, sub-regional adhesion and external alliances. Oil-rich authoritarian monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and its smaller Gulf Cooperation Council allies co-exist with less authoritarian Egypt (pre-Arab Spring Egypt), Iraq, and Sudan, former Soviet allies from the ‘rejectionist camp’ such as Syria and Libya, and the small, multi-sectarian Lebanon. Arab rejectionists claim that the Israeli occupation prevents peace is nothing more than a red herring. It is not the occupation that Arabs reject; it is Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish, sovereign and legitimate

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45 The influence of the Ulama on Saudi regional and national security policy, especially regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, is discussed in N Obaid, ‘The Power of Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Leaders’ in Middle East Quarterly:Middle East Forum 1 (3), (1999), pp. 51-58; the difficulties King Abdullah has faced from the Ulama over his modest social reforms are described in A Nicoll. Strategic Survey 2010 (London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010), pp. 245-6.


political entity. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria share some but not other features. These variations render meaningful application of any one theoretical framework across the region difficult.48

Saudi Arabia enjoys significant geo–strategic importance and thus differs from its neighbours in its International Relations. Frameworks from International Relations (IR) theory such as the realist school and its Neo-Liberal counter-point were devised by political scientists as analytical tools for explaining International Relations phenomena experienced and observed in the Euro-Atlantic region. Critics of these frameworks posit shortcomings, which detract from their relevance to post-colonial successor states and other Third World countries whose foreign policies appear to be driven by primary motivations distinct from those observed between First World and the erstwhile Second World states.

Braveboy-Wagner notes that whereas the latter’s theoretical discourses were framed with concepts such as East-West and North-South competition, the prolonged adherence by most Third World countries to the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) showed that the dominant paradigm was either marginal or irrelevant to their policy concerns.49 The NAM grouping’s inability to wrest concessions from dominant powers did not detract from their rejection of the dominant paradigms. The later formation of the Group of 77 (G-77) challenged the universality of the North-South formulation. Whereas established developed countries saw power dynamics as the most critical element of their International Relations concerns, for the developing world, comprehensive development attracted attention.50 Taking that explication as the basis for this study, it would be reasonable to suggest that, developed countries viewed the world and their position in it from a distinct perspective not comparable to that of their developing peers.

Given these complexities, this study will examine the Saudi decision-making process by examining Saudi policy-pronouncements relative to the establishment period of Arab-Israeli conflict until the present, and how stated preferences have shaped policy implementation. As will be discussed below, the triangular foreign policy priorities that have defined Saudi foreign policy since the 1950s - the focus upon regional security, Arab nationalism, and solidarity with Muslim nations, suggests that Subaltern Realism is the most appropriate theoretical framework.51 The originality of this study is highlighted through the gap in the research in Middle Eastern politics, with the current and existing research failing to assess the Saudi foreign policy within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict from a Subaltern stance. Therefore, this study seeks to add to the literature on the subject through the employment of a qualitative case-study approach to a Subaltern realist analysis of SA foreign policy. The case

50 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
study will include a historical analysis of both the Arab-Israeli conflict and Saudi foreign policy. Using this approach, the study will aim to take into account the nature of developing nations in a postcolonial world, presenting a more realist view of the way that foreign policy has been adopted in Saudi Arabia. This is instead of the use of traditional realist frameworks that would not enable the researcher to gain a working knowledge of the situation.

**Subaltern Realism and Saudi foreign policy**

The examination, above, of the traditional theories, notably Realism, that underpin International Relations has assessed that they are unsuitable for this current study. Because of their origins in the West and primary focus on the archetypal Western state, traditional theoretical frameworks within the field of International Relations, such as Realism are limited when it comes to analysing the foreign policies of developing countries. For this reason, this study looks to the theory of Subaltern Realism. Subaltern states are by definition weak and inferior in the systemic power hierarchy. Various described as ‘post-colonial successor states,’ ‘developing countries’, members of the ‘global south,’ and ‘least developed countries,’ they are a majority in the international system. Having been established in their modern form relatively recently, their nation building and state-formation processes are incomplete. Their security pre-occupations are often mainly internal and a function of the early stages of state-formation.\(^{52}\) Developed states, having successfully completed their state-building tasks, are focused on the anarchic systemic backdrop against which to pursue competitive interests. As a result, Ayoob posits, International Relations theoreticians have neglected the significance of domestic variables in foreign policy-formulation processes in the majority of state actors. He argues that post-Cold War changes have not changed the complex internal-external dynamics in these countries and cites examples to demonstrate that domestic concerns shape policy priorities in many developing states.\(^{53}\) This study will employ the Subaltern realist model to examine the policy-making processes as reflected in pronouncements about and implementation of Saudi foreign policy relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Subaltern Realism places the state at the centre of decision-making processes. Ayoob states, ‘the Subaltern realist position also posits the linkage between domestic and external variables to explain the nexus between intrastate and interstate conflicts. It does so by highlighting the intertwining of the state–making enterprise with regional balance of power issues.’\(^{54}\) Subaltern Realism therefore attempts to explain states’ behaviour by exploring the complex interplay of domestic and external variables, which is what this thesis aims to do. Furthermore, the Subaltern realist perspective assumes that issues relating to the maintenance and creation of domestic order and


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid p. 123.
those of international order are inextricably intertwined, especially in the arena of conflict and security. This theoretical framework is of particular utility to this thesis, for example, when discussing the domestic pressures exerted by the extremists and reformists in Saudi Arabia. After all, the theory looks at the way that governments in the developing world demand policy changes that might be of short-term gain without being particularly advantageous over a longer period of time.

In the case of Saudi Arabia specifically, there are many such examples of policy being influenced by marginal groups, which ties in neatly with the Subaltern analysis of International Relations. For example, despite pursuing close ties with the United States, the countries of the European Union and others such as Japan, Saudi Arabia has consistently tried to maintain a degree of unity between states in the Arab world. Placating neighbouring states, some of which have what might be deemed ‘extreme’ views on issues relating to the existence and security of Israel or the upholding of the principles of human rights, is obviously a prime example of extreme elements helping to shape Saudi foreign policy. Moreover, extreme elements within the state’s boundaries, most notably religious zealots hostile towards Western ideals of secularism or quasi-secular Christianity, can also play a part in shaping the international endeavours of the Saudi Arabian government.

Even in autocratic Saudi Arabia, where leaders are not elected according to policy or popularity, power is nonetheless partially devolved to the Ulama that, seen as guardians of Islamic doctrine, wield considerable influence. So rather than popularity at the polls being the benchmark for the Saudi authorities, it is the assumed popularity of the Islamic faith that bestows legitimacy upon a leadership granting influence to the Ulama. Accordingly, it is in the interests of the Saudi monarchy, if political control is to be maintained and fully realised, to ensure that domestic policies are sanctioned by the Ulama, and thus represent consensus between political and religious values. At the same time, potentially conflicting pressures, such as from Islamic reformists within Saudi society, need to be considered to ensure that the significant groups are not alienated to the extent that a threat to the internal Balance of power emerges. Realism can, therefore, be regarded as a consequentialist theory of political relations, whereby political elites will use available resources and ideologies in order to achieve the ends of political survival, their primary concern.

Internal and external determinants of Saudi foreign policy

Much like any modern nation-state, Saudi Arabia has to balance domestic and international concerns when constructing effective policies. This is as true of issues such as trade, welfare and human rights as it is of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Meeting the concerns of a state’s citizens in the short-

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term is obviously crucial, though in order to achieve this in the long-term it is often equally important that international obligations are met and advantageous deals struck at an inter-state level.

A prime example of the juxtaposition between International Relations and domestic political expediency can be seen in areas such as foreign aid. Though it may be important for a nation’s standing among international allies to maintain a generous programme of aid to developing countries, such a practice can be unpopular domestically where people want to see money spent on their own services. Moreover, the same can be said of conflicts. On some occasions there is domestic pressure to stay out of wars or even peace-keeping missions for fear of casualties from their own country as well as the expense, despite the fact this would lower a nation’s standing and thus negotiating power on an international scale. At other times, the complete opposite is true – domestic pressure to intervene in a foreign dispute, when the government of the day is reluctant for fear of antagonising international partners. So, it is clear, there are a huge variety of situations where the domestic and international pressures are equally acute. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Saudi policy towards Israel-Palestine in particular has been subject to contrary external and internal pressures.

At the international level, policy objectives of achieving regional security and promoting Arab nationalism have led Saudi Arabia to form alliances with both Western and regional allies, representing disparate political stances towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Allegiance to these competing forces can be accounted for by the separate but not dichotomous priorities of ensuring regional security, economic strength and stability, necessitating the establishment of trade relationships with potent Western powers, and maintaining strong relations with powerful Arab neighbours. As a result of Saudi Arabia’s close relationship with the United States, its foreign policy stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict has been marked by ambiguity, with considerable discrepancies between official language, as evident in Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ documents, and actual practice. This has occasionally generated tensions, posing significant obstacles to Arab unity. Domestically, the conservative and influential Ulama, the religio-political elite, constitute an important source of pressure shaping aggressive foreign policy towards Israel, which usually pushes the Saudi government to condemn Israel’s actions and consider it as illegitimate. However, liberals present an alternative voice on many issues, and on the religiously charged issue of Israel-Palestine this is particularly obvious. Although lacking the Ulama’s impact, they represent a powerful voice on a range of issues, including economic and commercial interests as well as the constitutional make-up of the Middle East.

Four interrelated forces representing international and domestic factors have significantly shaped Saudi foreign policy. These are Arab nationalism, regional security, political economy of oil and Islam, representing the dichotomy between conservatism and reformism with regard to political Islam. Arab nationalist concerns for
‘Arab unity, the unresolved grievances of the Palestinians, and the conflict with Israel’ have, since the Kingdom’s founding in 1932, been prioritised as a determining factor shaping Saudi foreign policy. This is representative of both general popular sentiment and the Ulama’s ideology. Furthermore, the prioritising of Arab nationalism embodies a larger regional concern for establishing and maintaining strong ties with powerful Arab neighbours.

Though Saudi leadership has not always displayed policy coherence with these neighbours, leading at various times to inflamed tensions between powerful Arab states, Saudi Arabia’s specific political, geographic and economic advantages, and its commitment to Islamic conservatism, established it as a regional mediator, and, consequently, promoter of Arab unity. Furthermore, with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi foreign policy is guided by the belief that the conflict is rooted in Palestinian grievances. At the core of this is a stance of non-recognition of Israel. Saudi policy towards the Palestinians has resulted in considerable financial and political support, policies that have resulted from and enjoyed significant popular support from the Saudi citizenry.

The prioritising of regional security of the Kingdom by ensuring both the stability of the monarchic regime and ‘the safety of petroleum exports,’ has been the primary determinant of Saudi Arabia’s close ties with the United States, the kingdom’s closest strategic security ally. However, due to close US-Israeli relations, this alliance has engendered domestic and regional tensions, at times hindering the goal of fostering Arab unity.

The apparent ideological conflict inherent in the Saudi-US alliance illustrates the range of competing forces that shape foreign policy, such as the kingdom’s economic interests, regional security, and ideological and religious forces represented by Arab nationalist influences. The government describes Islam as ‘the most important factor affecting the determination of priorities of the Kingdom’s foreign policy,’ most visibly expressed in promoting solidarity within the Islamic world:

“These efforts originate from the comprehensive image of the meaning of Islamic solidarity that includes several concepts, the major concept is the collective security of Islamic countries, and working out to peacefully settle disputes among Islamic countries, and provide economic aid to Islamic countries and societies of limited potentials, provide emergency assistance and relief to Islamic countries affected by disaster, and back up Muslims and defend their issues and provide moral and material support to Islamic groups wherever they exist, through generous contribution in building

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61 Ibid
mosques, and establishing Islamic civilised centres.\textsuperscript{62}

From this brief outline, it is clear that significant links exist between internal and domestic factors, with national and religious identity constituting the foundation of the state’s strategies and policies. Even the Saudi-US relationship, which could be described as a counterintuitive alliance, is shown on further examination as one that strategically promotes internal economic and political interests.

\textbf{Originality of the study}

Having presented a discussion of the overriding and dominant theory that currently exists in International Relations theory; it is possible to underline the originality of the thesis and the focus on the application of the theory of Subaltern Realism on the development of Saudi foreign policy with relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The assessment of traditional International Relations theory, notably Realism, in explaining foreign policy of developing nations clearly has its limitations. Therefore, the application of the Subaltern Realism theory developed by Ayoob and the manner in which it will be employed in this current work will provide a new form of assessment for the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. It is thought that the application of this framework will be much more suited to a critical assessment of internal and external factors that impact upon the foreign policy of a nation in the developing world. This type of study has not been undertaken before. Due to the originality of the study, it is necessary to gain a firm grasp of the methodological approach used in this study, as it differs from past assessments of the subject of Saudi Arabian foreign policy in its format and scope.

\textbf{Methodological Approach to the Study}

The acknowledgement that a study based within the concept of Subaltern Realism has led to the development of a specific methodology. Therefore, the use of academic literature and primary data as a joint source of information in a mixed methods approach that utilises a case study shell is the approach selected for this entire work. This section justifies the approach chosen, before underlining the key research aims, questions and hypotheses that stem from this type of research study.

The thesis will utilise a qualitative, case-study-based approach for the analysis of the Saudi foreign policy’s response to the Arab–Israeli conflict. It will focus on the underlying factors influencing foreign policy decision-making. Qualitative research presents the most suitable methodology for analytically establishing both internal and external factors influencing Saudi foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The analysis of the Saudi foreign policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict will focus mainly on an analysis of the existing and available empirical literature on the subject. This secondary source analysis allows the researcher to use previously written studies to assess the situation in a more insightful manner than simply conducting a primary

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
research analysis. The existing empirical literature will be supported by a primary study to provide further insight into the views of the main domestic pressure groups in Saudi Arabia concerning foreign policy, as well as the impact of external factors on this developing nation, applying the Subaltern Realism theory as its base. This dual research methodology was adopted for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is vital to identify the impact of the nature of the Saudi Arabia regime on the data collected for this research. Saudi Arabia does not allow political speech. The government also monitors press and other forms of communicative media such as satellite and Internet reception. As Saudi authorities claim, the reason for these acts is to prevent political dissent and whatever is deemed to be offensive to the Arab culture, Islamic morality and to the government, in particular to the royal family. As a result of this repressive policy, regretfully, it was not an easy task obtaining useful data through direct contact with either officials or ordinary citizens. Therefore this thesis has adopted a form of correspondence approach to communicate with a limited number of different figures in Saudi Arabia, including leaders and representatives from liberal and Islamist groups. This form of analysis was used to help others express their opinions and to allow more confidence when answering without thinking that their responses would be discussed in a way that would allow them to be identified.

Firstly, it was felt that scholars within this subject area would reject a methodology consisting of purely primary data, due to the fact that the capacity to collect primary qualitative data is severely constrained by the political context noted above. Thus the data would not necessarily represent the major parties involved. Secondly, an unofficial study by an unknown researcher, again because of the restrictive political context, would not be able to achieve its main aims if it only attempted to conduct primary research on the subject. The lack of access to key individuals in the decision-making process, as well as the lack of trust taken by individuals who were initially contacted through this research to see if they could comment on the topic towards this researcher, combined to show that the focus on only primary data collection as the method would not work. It was important to use the correspondence between key individuals as a central part of the methodology but this necessarily has to be combined with a secondary source analysis, to help strengthen the claims made in this research. In this manner, the methodology selected allows for deeper understanding from a range of perspectives, rather than the researcher having to solely rely on the interpretation of the situation by a selection of potentially subjective participants.

63 The terms ‘Liberal’, the ‘Liberals’ and the ‘Liberalist Group’ refer to those in Saudi Arabia who wish to liberalise and modernize the country. This term is controversial and does not necessarily correspond to the Western ideal of Liberals. However, it has been used in this study to describe those in Saudi Arabia that wish to 'liberalise' Saudi Arabia in a general sense (i.e. the antithesis of conservatism). The researcher considered using other terms but all alternative terms (including modernisers) seemed to run into similar problems.
**Collection methods**

As noted above, the academic secondary source analysis was the main form of data analysis. This form of analysis attempted a top-down approach to the study of the available academic literature. First, it was necessary to conduct a brief analysis of whether traditional International Relations theories would be able to describe, explain and enhance the knowledge of Saudi foreign policy, taking into account the pressure from a range of factors, both domestic and foreign. This theoretical analysis argued that it was not possible and that more recently developed theories such as the Subaltern realist view should be considered. This was selected for reasons outlined in greater detail later in this work, and within this perspective, the researcher conducted a thorough search for all journal articles and research books (as well as other forms of academic works such as memorandum and presentations). This was combined with official government documents from the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The secondary method of data collection took the form of correspondence between individuals within certain Saudi groups. Accordingly, two types of correspondence were designed and sent to representatives from each group. First is the liberal group that has grown and became internally well known since the 9/11 attacks. After a number of Saudis were found to have been involved in terrorist activities, most notably Osama bin Laden, Islamist schools have become the target of severe criticism internally as several Saudi citizens and scholars have accused radical Islamists of brainwashing the younger generations and using them under the cover of Islam. Therefore after the failure of radical Islamism (as will be discussed later), the liberal school in Saudi Arabia has appeared, become more active than before and more daring in arguing against political decisions regardless of the trouble they might have faced with the Saudi government. Their voice has grown stronger in the different sources of media and the political arena in the Kingdom but not surprisingly, they have been subjected to several attacks and taunting specifically from the radical Islamist group known for its hatred to liberal thoughts and beliefs. In addition, correspondence has been composed for the Islamists, journalists and nationals, to analyse their varying views regarding the Palestinian issue. The research aims to discover how both liberals and Islamists have affected the Kingdom's decision-making internally or externally. Also, both groups’ view in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict will be discussed and analysed.

The preparation of the correspondence letters has been the most effective tool to obtain useful information since some parties have chosen to keep their names anonymous and such private correspondence gives them the chance to express their views without facing risk. Such freedom of expression has encouraged them to answer the questions truthfully and without any restrictions. Surprisingly, certain participants were calling for achieving peace with Israel claiming that Palestinians themselves have established relations with Israel, and wondering if Arabs are more Palestinians than Palestinians themselves and forced to refuse establishing any relations with Israel.
The total number of correspondence letters sent out was 30, but only 15 participants have responded, this includes 12 answers from liberal activists and 3 responses from the Islamist school. However, several events have had great impact on the completion of the used correspondence method. Beside the nature of the Saudi regime, several parties, especially from the Islamist side of the debate, have refused to participate and only responded by either accusing the sender of being westernised or collecting this information for the government. This would confirm the choice of academic secondary source analysis as the main form of data analysis supported by limited primary data. Furthermore, the receivers from both groups may have felt that the survey content was too sensitive and they are not used to expressing their political opinions to anyone except to people who they trust. Although receivers were fully informed about the purpose of this study, a few refused to participate due to their fear of being tracked or investigated by the government.

**Ethical issues**

Participants in correspondence were clearly informed about the purpose of the research they are being asked for to participate in and understand the risks they may face as a result being part of the research. In addition, names of participants who requested to be anonymous will not be revealed and any indications to their real identities will not be mentioned and their confidentiality will be firmly respected.

**Translation issues**

As a guideline for the transliteration of Arabic words into English, the researcher has adopted the format used by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES), which follows a modified form of the Encyclopaedia of Arabic transliteration system. The advantage of this system is that words are rendered in format readily intelligible to both Arabic and non-Arabic readers. Names of places and political leaders and cultural figures, as well as words, which appear in the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, are spelled in accordance with the most common English spelling. Thus, these words are stripped from diacritical marks and are not italicised. For instance, the researcher adopted the format Gamal Abdel Nasser (not Jamāl ‘Abd al- Nāsir), jihad (not jihād). However, for Arabic words, which are not in the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, the researcher applied italics. Finally, certain words were spelled in accordance with the format found in the IJMES’s word list, such as the word Ulama.

**Aims and objectives of the study**

Within the framework of Subaltern Realism, the central aim of this thesis is to examine the claim that the Arab-Israeli conflict has a significant bearing on the Saudi national decision-making process. This requires an exploration of the extent to which Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy is determined by international (or external) and/or domestic (or internal) factors. The primary focus will be on Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict,
though others foci, issues and actors will also be considered. This is a controversial, divisive and politically sensitive issue amongst Saudi citizenry as well as the influential religious elite, the Ulama. The explanation of these internal and external factors provides the core theme of this study. Hence, the thesis seeks to explore and analyse the factors, the reasons, and the events that influenced Saudi decision-making.

Research Questions

This study is driven by a number of key research questions. As noted above, the study aims to assess the nature of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict and to find a possible theoretical framework to immerse the analysis within, helping to explain the important aspects of Saudi foreign policy and how both internal and external factors impact this. The main research questions are:

1. What is the Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict?

2. How far do internal and external factors influence this foreign policy?

3. To what extent can the foreign policy be explained by using a Subaltern Realism perspective?

In order to strengthen the focus of the study's theme, several research objectives have been developed. These include:

a. Researching thoroughly the history of Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict

b. Creating a research methodology that allows for the suitable application of research leading to definitive conclusions

c. Analysing the nature of the Subaltern Realism perspective and how it should be applied to this study.

Hypothesis/Argument

The development of the research questions for this work, combined with a working understanding of Ayoob’s Subaltern realist perspective, can also lead to the creation of hypotheses and arguments that will either be supported or rejected through the findings of the primary analysis. The use of hypotheses can be twofold. It provides the researcher with a central aim and target with which to focus attention on, ensuring that the study remains on course and answers the major research questions posed initially. Moreover, the hypothesis is a ‘powerful tool in scientific research … enabling researchers to relate theory to observation and observation to theory.’

64 The hypothesis is defined as ‘the researcher’s prediction about the outcome of the study … derived

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inductively from observation or deductively from a known theory.'\textsuperscript{65} Using this definition, it is possible to make a prediction on the outcome of this study, using Ayoob’s Subaltern Realism and its potential impact on the understanding of foreign policy within developing countries in a post-colonial global system. The hypotheses include:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Saudi Arabian foreign policy will display tendencies of Subaltern Realism, particularly with regard to the relationship with the United States (as a powerful external force).

Null hypothesis: Saudi Arabian foreign policy will not align with the Subaltern realist perspective.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): This Subaltern Realism will be more evident in the early period of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Null hypothesis: Saudi Arabian foreign policy will have remained within the Subaltern realist perspective throughout the period under study.

The creation of these hypotheses will help the researcher to ensure that the study is focused and remains in line to achieve the answers to the fundamental research questions that underline the design and shape of the study.

\textbf{Thesis Structure}

Having provided details of the methodological approach used in this work, as well as outlining International Relations theory, its limitations and the need to implement the use of the Subaltern Realism theory, it is important to present a short overview of the thesis structure. The thesis is made up of a number of chapters that look at the following aspects of Saudi foreign policy: the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Western influence including the prominence of the United States relationship; the role of Middle Eastern neighbours; and the role of domestic influences including democratic reform, the role of religion and the various factions within the Saudi elite. Therefore, the first chapter will introduce Subaltern Realism, which explicitly informs the construction of the theoretical framework. The second chapter discusses the history of the country, including the Saudi political system and the decision-making process, going on to explore the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iranian threat. Chapter Three will focus on the important influence of Western and Arab countries on Saudi foreign policy. The fourth chapter examines the internal influences and their impact on Saudi foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Chapter Five examines the Arab-Israeli conflict with reference to Saudi Arabian foreign policy and provides an analysis of the conflict and the foreign policy through a Subaltern realist lens. Finally, the conclusion shall provide an overall summary of the findings for this study and draw out their implications.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
CHAPTER ONE

Subaltern Realism

Overview

The introductory chapter presented a concise overview of the aim of this study and the fact that it will be underpinned by the Subaltern Realism theory. The major aim of this thesis is to test the claim that the Arab-Israeli conflict has a significant bearing on the Saudi national decision-making process. This study has developed an original viewpoint through which to assess the situation, basing the analysis within the concept of Subaltern Realism. This choice provides two main areas of originality: the application and development of Subaltern Realism to the case of Saudi Arabia; and an account of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia in the Arab-Israeli conflict that enables a proper reflection on domestic tensions and in particular to the role of the liberal group. To achieve success using this original approach, it is important for the research to assess how far the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia is dominated by either international or domestic factors or a combination of the two. This is a complex issue and one that is made more challenging due to the lack of a specific theory that enables the analysis of foreign policy of a state when influenced by a multitude of factors such as the international and domestic factors potentially influencing Saudi Arabia. The need to place this study within an International Relations theory is important. Weber notes that ‘to try to fully understand and make sense of international politics, we often turn to International Relations theory and this imposes its own vision of how the global society works.’ Moreover, McClelland states that theory ‘is intended to be a kind of yardstick for the evaluation of what already exists in the field of knowledge and a kind of signpost pointing into the future’ looking in both directions to the past and future. Expanding on this point, in 1955 Kenneth Thompson stated that the function of theory in International Relations lies firstly in the basic ordering of data, providing ‘a framework for systematic and imaginative hypothesising.’ As noted above, this can contribute to establishing ‘uniformities and uniqueness’ and also understanding ‘contingencies and irrationalities.’ In essence, the theory that underpins any piece of research provides a ‘coherence and significance to data and findings’ and contributes to the overall accrual of knowledge.

This chapter thus aims to lay out in detail the critical elements of Subaltern Realism as the underlying foundation of the overall thesis, additionally pointing out why this theory is the most appropriate for the analysis of Saudi foreign policy. To achieve this, the chapter focuses on the development of the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter demonstrates an analysis of the traditional theories of International Relations that are most helpful in

69 Ibid, p. 736.
explaining Saudi foreign policy.

The study is conducted within the broad approach of Realism. The major theoretical analysis utilises the strand of Realism known as Subaltern Realism. The focus of this strand of Realism on both internal and external elements of inter-state relations has a primary focus on the state (an element that keeps it within the realist field). The use of the theory also contributes to explanations of issues analysed in each of the chapters. This chapter initially presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. The work provides a top-down approach, identifying the use of the overarching theory of Realism as the basis of the study, before addressing different strands of Realism that have been developed by International Relations theorists. The study focuses on three main strands of Realism; Classical, Neo and Subaltern Realism. Using an assessment of the empirical literature, the study addresses the nature of each of these theories and their limitations. Throughout the chapter, the analysis of the literature helps to identify why Subaltern Realism is the most appropriate theory to underpin this current study, although it does have limitations that also need to be evaluated. Therefore, this chapter will outline the key elements of Subaltern Realism, but initially, it also discusses both Classical and Neo-Realism in order to highlight the limitations of both strands of realist theory and justify the use of Subaltern Realism.

**Realism**

As one of the two most dominant forms of International Relations (alongside the competing theory of Liberalism), the theory of Realism is a major strand of International Relations theory that has been divided into a range of theories that have developed within its core beliefs concerning the international system. First, it is pertinent to present a definition of Realism as a traditional International Relations theory. Ray and Kaarbo provide the definition that Realism is a ‘theoretical perspective for understanding International Relations that emphasises states as the most important actor in global politics, the anarchical nature of the international system, and the pursuit of power to secure states’ interests.’ The realist perspective underscores the fact that all nation-states are often inspired by national interests to act, which is usually disguised as moral concerns. Realists believe that any state would have an interest of preserving its political autonomy, as well as territorial integrity. Moreover, it is identified by Donnelly that ‘Realism emphasises the constraints on politics imposed by human nature and the absence of international government. Together, they make International Relations largely a realm of power and

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interest. Donnelly’s view of Realism underlines that human nature has not changed throughout history and that its concept is one that strives for power and control, leading to the development of an anarchic global system and the desire for power of the individual state actor.

The main objective for a state, as viewed through the realist perspective, is to maintain state power, which is defined in terms of military power, political domination, diplomatic power, and cultural power. Based on this view, realists believe that the international system is anarchic and brutal as an actor engage in a zero-sum game whereby a loss on the side of one actor is the gain of the other. In the global system, there is no leviathan, which is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the affairs of all actors; instead the vacuum left is filled by the powerful states. In this regard, the international system exists based on the Hobbesian state of nature whereby life is complicated and highly calculated. Peace in the international system is maintained by a system of balance of power but is always fragile due to the self-interest of the state. This is because the self-interest of states leads to continual changes in power as nations attempt to assert influence to gain relative strength. The assessment of Realism in International Relations and its suitability in debating events that take place in the international system has led to the development of many individual strands of the overall theory of Realism. It is expressed by Wang that ‘Realism includes Classical Realism and Neo-Realism. Its defining features are that power decides and that International Relations are conflicting in nature’, but that the different strands offer varying views on the development of the state and the role of state actors.

The discussion of International Relations theory usually confirms that the state of International Relation theory centres on the key debate between Realism and Liberalism however, this is true to a certain extent. Moreover, it is also argued that there are debates within each of these separate International Relations theories, with Realism and Liberalism both divided in the understanding of the global system, the development of relationships and the primary interests of state actors. Through this viewpoint, Realism has been divided into two main schools of thought, with that of Classical Realism and Neo-Realism asserting varying principles under the overall heading of the theory of Realism. These two theories are discussed in this chapter, with their failure to assess the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia in a suitable manner highlighted, hence the introduction of the theory of Subaltern Realism and its use in this current work.

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73 Ibid, p. 78.
Classical Realism

The approach of Realism has been divided into further theoretical sub-strands including that of Classical Realism. This terminology only appeared after the development of other forms of Realism including Neo-Realism. This form of Realism has been supported and developed by political theorists including individuals such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and Hans Morgenthau. These individuals were not necessarily realists (as it is a modern concern) but supported the principles that underpin it. The underlying principles of Realism are outlined in this section. Realism in the context of International Relations theory emerged with its guiding principle of accepting the world as it really is, and conflict as an inevitable product of human nature. Classical realists believe that the international system is essentially anarchic, that is, there is no process of control above the state. They assert that self-interest is a priority that defines state behaviour towards other states. This is often illustrated by foreign policies that seek to secure the state through aggressive (often military) actions that will either maintain the balance of power (characterised by levels of resources such as weapons, troops, etc.), or topple the status quo, creating a new order. This is not to say that states will not form alliances, only that alliances are still rooted in self-interest, dominated by more powerful states (based again on levels of material resources), and can be dissolved or superseded by the state at any given time.

In other words, international agreements are not binding and will be breached should the states that are party to them feel that they are no longer in their self-interest. A contemporary example of this is the 2003 United States military intervention in Iraq, which was perceived by many as an illustration of international regime failure as the United Nations Security Council was effectively circumvented by the world’s most dominant power. The ambiguity that surrounds international laws, for example, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and other treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol, also highlight the perseverance of state interest over a more liberal approach to International Relations.

The underlying principles of Classical Realism can be traced to political thinkers such as the English theorist Thomas Hobbes. It was Hobbes’ focus on the state of human nature that created the fundamental principle that political life was developed through the state of nature. It has been stressed that ‘for Hobbes, the state of nature is an extremely adverse human circumstance in which there is a permanent state of war of every man against every man; in their natural condition every man, woman and child is endangered by everybody else.’ Hobbes’ pre-civil condition has underpinned the theory of Classical Realism since its conception. This is supported by Morgenthau

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78 Ibid. p. 71
who stated that the dominant nature of humans leads to conflict between individuals in society. Classical realists maintain that states with material power (defined by military statistics) will always seek relative gains. In other words, according to the Classical realists, states will not only seek to increase their absolute wealth or power but will also seek to increase the gap between ‘their own holdings and that of other states.’ Similarly, according to Matanduno, ‘One of the key insights of the realist approach to International Relations is that nation-states are consistently sensitive to considerations of relative gain an advantage.’ Jervis notes that in fact the discussion about relative gains has ‘remained largely at the level of theory and prescription, with much less attention focused on practical analysis where decision-makers do in fact exhibit relative-gains concerns.’ This factor will be explored in greater detail throughout the thesis and helps contribute to the choice of theory. It also outlines why both Classical and Neo-Realism are unable to explain Saudi foreign policy.

Classical Realism continues to influence policy and academic writing today despite the influx of alternative theories. The prominence of conflict in the world and a focus on military strength (particularly a result of the United States’ conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq) further underpin some major aspects of this theory. Yet, as will be discussed in the coming sections, Classical Realism was not created to address political developments in the developing world, as well as in considering decision-making processes and societal factors. Morgenthau believed in objective laws with roots in human nature, the operation of these laws was impervious to our preferences and attempts to challenge them could only risk failure. Morgenthau underlined that political decisions should be judged according to results, not intentions. In fact, legalistic-moralistic approaches, as Morgenthau termed them, could be viewed as morally reprehensible, in cases where it undermined national interest and ran contrary to the statesman’s commitment to protect the citizens of the nation. Good policies minimise risk and maximise benefits. In the anarchical world of international politics, the only means to achieve security is the pursuit of power, and interest is thus defined as power. The key to avoid war is to maintain a balance, in which the most powerful actors are invested in maintaining the status quo. In predicting the actions of states, Morgenthau therefore dismisses ideology and ideational motives, as masks for the real material underpinnings that inform all state action. It also led him to conclude that international politics is conducted, at least on a general level, according to a predictable pattern, irrespective of the history and development of the individual states.

Classical Realism has been supported throughout history, according to its proponents, with a large body of

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79 Ibid, p. 73
literature stretching far back into antiquity. The Greek Historian Thucydides viewed the Spartan declaration of war against Athens in the Peloponnesian war as a natural response to Athenian disruption of the balance of power. According to Gilpin, this work was the first type of scientific study of international politics. In the 16th Century, Hobbes compared interstate relations to a hypothetical pre-historic state of nature. Without a central authority to keep states in check, they would be impelled to resort to force in order to protect themselves. Hobbes’ most acclaimed work, *Leviathan*, characterised the international order in terms of territorial entities in constant rivalry through state power. More contemporary realist scholars have identified in these writings the combination of anarchic society, the imperative of self-help and the resultant security dilemma. Machiavelli’s writings in *The Prince* also fall into this category, and emphasised the need for political leaders to transgress moral boundaries in order to maintain social stability. Machiavelli also provided arguments for how state leaders should behave in an anarchic world, placing great worth on control of one’s subjects, a factor he saw as critical to state survival. For Machiavelli, as with Morgenthau, what mattered was the success of political action, not the means and intentions. The Twentieth Century Realism of Carr and Morgenthau can thus be seen as contributing to a long tradition of thought, rather than strictly a new approach to international politics.

The advocacy of the Classical realist perception of the international system outlines that the theory essentially focuses on four major characteristics: The state is the primary unit in the international system; security is the priority of the state; states rely on self-help to gain security while the pursuit of power, including the use of military force is integral to this need; and peace relies on the successful maintenance of a balance of power. The concepts of both balance of power and the quest for security are critical in understanding divergences within the theoretical debate. In line with the Machiavellian approach to statecraft, Jenson and Sorensen suggest that Classical Realism essentially strips states of moral accountability. States must act in their self-interest at all times to protect their citizens; an aspect, which also contributes to what critics believe, is a system of distrust. Therefore, the analysis of Classical Realism provides a theory to help assess the development of the international system and the actions of state actors within this. Finally, it is important to state that Classical Realism has certain strengths that solidify its position as a theory of International Relations. It is noted that these include ‘its attention

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to issues of power and politics in the international system; second, its recognition of the importance of history, culture and ideas for state behaviour and third, its emphasis on agency rather than structure.\textsuperscript{92} Despite this, a competing theory, Neo-Realism, has developed within the overall concept of Realism and this is discussed in the next section.

**Neo-Realism**

Having considered the nature of Classical Realism, it is now crucial to discuss Neo-Realism as another possible area of theory within which to conduct the study. In 1959, the realist scholar Kenneth Waltz published his seminal work, *Man, the State, and War* in which he offered a critique of Classical (or political) Realism. Whilst maintaining that the international system is essentially anarchic, Waltz outlined his belief that conflict should not be seen as a product of human nature but rather as a product of the international system.\textsuperscript{93} According to Waltz, the international system is characterised by uniform behaviour amongst all the states. It is important to underline that when Waltz wrote *Man the State and War*, he was not explicitly promoting a new form of Realism, hence Brown’s observation underneath. Brown, reviewing Waltz’s work, underlined that ‘Waltzian structural Realism (or Neo-Realism) is now, but was not then, seen as breaking with the traditions of Classical Realism.’\textsuperscript{94} The quotation shows, it is only after the Theory of International Politics was published 20 years later, that writers such as Brown look back and saw its roots in the 1959 book, underlining the nature of this comment. Moreover, it has been pointed out that Waltz’s view provides the belief that ‘there is a genuine disagreement between Neo-Realism and Classical Realism over the role played by human nature in International Relations. Waltzian Neo-Realism appears, contrary to the tradition, to reject any major role for human nature, describing theories that emphasize this notion as reductionist.’\textsuperscript{95} Through this viewpoint, the development of Waltz’s view of Realism and understanding outlined that human nature was not a fundamental part in conflict, with the belief that the international system was more likely based on structures, hence the development of the structural (Neo-realist) form of Realism. Through this, the development of Waltz’s theory was based on the assertion that the overall international system helps to condition states’ behaviour, creating a form of competition for security among states that leads to a balance of power. This structural theory rejects the notion of human nature as a profound influence and focuses much more on the nature of the wider international system as a structure that holds the greatest influence on state’s actions.

The idea is based on a process of socialisation and survival of the fittest. The claims from Waltz here are associated with his *Theory of International Politics* as they do not appear in other works such as *Man, The State and War*. It is argued that States must behave in accordance with material interest and the pursuit of power or risk


\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
annihilation. Anomalies may exist for short periods, in the aftermath of ideologically inspired revolution, but these regimes will soon begin to conform to the exigencies of power politics. The nature of the system demands that states behave in this way or they would simply cease to exist. Waltz, therefore, drew a sharp line between the domains of International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis. The former does not concern itself with the specific context of individual nations, but draws an overall picture of state behaviour. Due the emphasis on systemic causes, ‘Neo-Realism’ is also known as ‘structural Realism.’ This differs from the concept of Classical Realism because of the lack of emphasis on the importance of human nature and its development of conflict, instead focusing on the systemic causes, leading to the term structural Realism. Waltz’s new approach aimed to counter several of the liberal/idealist critiques of Realism, especially those regarding different levels of analysis and the reduction in importance of domestic factors. According to Shimko, Neo-Realism ‘is best understood as an alternative to Classical Realism shaped by enduring liberal traditions in the United States.’

These ideas were developed with the publishing of Theory of International Politics in 1979 in which Waltz elaborated on issues such as realist definitions of power and security. In order to counter threats, states need both internal and external capabilities which consist of domestic resources such as the military, technological resources, manpower, etc. (i.e. traditional Classical realist material power concepts); in addition to external capabilities through alliances.

Similar to Classical realists, Neo-realists still associate military power with state dominance, but place more emphasis on the formation of alliances in order to strengthen one’s position. The concerns surrounding trust in other nations are also prominent within this theory. Neo-realists emphasise the role of uncertainty in the international system, which increases the security dilemma. This dilemma occurs when a state is perceived to be too strong and is countered by other states actors, usually through military build-up or aggressive policies (highlighted for example by the arms race of the Cold War). Overall, this presents a perpetual state of uncertainty and insecurity. Whilst Classical realists believe in most of these principles, Neo-realists are divided. The division of Neo-realists centres on the confusion surrounding the security dilemma caused by state action.

These structural constraints tie in with realist perceptions of a state’s pursuit of power. Scholars such as Shimko have argued that in light of these types of assertions, Neo-Realism ‘preserves much of the structure of Classical realist analysis while abandoning its more objectionable … foundation’. According to Goldman, the ‘fundamental difference’ between the two strands of Realism lies in ‘the relative explanatory power of anarchy

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and human nature. The argument here provides the view that whereas Classical Realism focuses on human nature as its major level of analysis; Neo-realists focus on structural and international factors. It is thought that this type of debate has motivated the theory of Subaltern Realism, which highlights the domestic level, a level that is often downplayed by other forms of Realism.

Neo-realists believe that conflict can only be understood in terms of the situation created by ‘an inherently insecure, anarchical environment’. This limits the extent to that policymakers can influence the system. As such, survival remained ‘the minimum objective of all states’. Neo-realists reject the claims of Neo-liberals that the action of states can change the anarchic nature of the system through economic interdependence and international cooperation.

Neo-realists interpret alliances in line with the order of the international system, which can assume a unipolar, bipolar or multipolar structure. A bipolar structure is perceived to be the most secure approach for the anarchic system and according to Waltz creates deterrence for superpowers that will prefer to maintain the status quo rather than put their survival at risk. The most prominent example of this in the modern context is of course the Cold War in which the United States and the Soviet Union maintained a balance of power until the latter’s disintegration in the late 1980s. The structural Realism of Waltz is strongly influenced by scientism and is modelled on the objective rigour of natural sciences. The theory is based on tested hypotheses to present objective and universal truths. However, both Classical and Neo- forms of Realism have been judged to have limitations, particularly when applied to developing countries that are heavily influenced by both external and internal forces, such as the analysis of Saudi foreign policy. The focus of the study aims to address the situation concerning Saudi Arabian foreign policy and how domestic factors and international influence help to shape this policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. One study by Waltz actually presented the limitations of Neo-Realism in this particular type of research. He notes that perhaps the common criticism of the Neo-Realism theory is that, it does not include the effect of the ‘policies and behaviours of states on international politics. True, states are omitted from structural theory. It is, after all, a theory about international politics and not a theory about foreign policy. A Neo-realist theory of international politics explains how external forces shape states’ behaviour but says nothing about the effects of internal forces. Therefore, it is apparent that the Neo-realist theory in particular is not suited to this current study because it rejects fully the impact of domestic policies on international politics, which is exactly the point that is trying to be assessed.

103 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
Pluralism, Historical Sociology-English School and Regional Security Complex Theory

When attempting to provide a complete analysis of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, it is also necessary to conduct an analysis of other key theories that challenge Realism and criticise it for not presenting an all-encompassing view of foreign policy. With foreign policy analysis, it is important to discuss key theories such as the historical-sociological English school, pluralism and regional security complex theory. An assessment of these theories underlines that the Classical or Neo-realist approach to the subject of Saudi Arabian foreign policy limits the researcher, hence the need to use a different theoretical approach such as the modified Subaltern Realism perspective utilised in this work.

Initially, the concept of pluralism argues that the position of Realism is far too structured and narrow-minded of its view of the state, state’s actions and factors that influence the state in its decision-making. A recent key study in this debate was by Wilkins. Her view underlines that ‘pluralism offers a valuable alternative to systemic theories of International Relations as a means for understanding the international political behaviour of Arab states.’\(^{107}\) Her view states that pluralism does not simply view that state as a single entity, but focuses on the impacting factors on its decision-making ability. This is reflected by Hinnebusch who underlines that foreign policy and policy overall of a state may be impacted by ‘competing bureaucracies, interest groups and public opinion, the role of leadership beliefs and images.’\(^{108}\) This stresses that the views of Classical Realism and Neo-Realism towards state actions in terms of foreign policy reject the importance of sub-sections of society that are clearly seen as fundamental to a state’s actions when adopting the view of pluralism. In the context of Saudi Arabia, it is important to note that there seem to be a range of factors that impact on decision-making, hence the need to adopt a different perspective on the topic.

There are other views that need to be taken into account as well. As a pre-eminent scholar on International Relations in the Middle East, Halliday is an important voice on the topic. His work focuses on the belief that Classical realist approaches have ‘misrepresented the Middle East’ due to a minimisation of crucial factors that are internal and impact on states and societies.\(^{109}\) Halliday’s view, focusing on the historical sociology of a state, takes into account ‘conflict and its causes, the role of ideology and religion, transnational actors and movements, the role of domestic change within society.’\(^{110}\) The competing arguments towards foreign policy analysis in the Middle East therefore reflect that orthodox realist perspectives fail to underline or take into account the fundamental impact of a wide range of factors including ideology, religion and domestic groups that may


\(^{110}\) Ibid, p. 37.
influence the state’s decision-making ability.

The final conflicting theory that rejects the Classical and Neo realist viewpoint is that of regional security complex theory. This theory, developed by Buzan and Waever in 2003, focuses on how security issues at a regional level tend to dominate the actions of the state, rather than the individual state actions focusing on their own security. The argument provided is one that interlinks security concerns for the entire geographical region, emphasising that in the case of Saudi Arabia, the external factors of regional security and relationships need to be addressed as well as the actions of the state.111 Through these analyses, the rejection of the traditional views of Classical and Neo-Realism are highlighted and it is apparent that a new perspective needs to be adopted by scholars to help address the current state of foreign policy analysis in the Middle East. Therefore, when acknowledging the impact of factors on states in the Middle East and of Saudi Arabia in particular, a new approach needs to be adopted to be able to enhance and fully understand the developments that take place. Therefore, it is important to analyse this, enabling the introduction of the view of Subaltern Realism and why it is perceived to be more suitable as an underlying theory during the analysis.

**Subaltern Realism**

Having addressed the limitations of the theories of Classical Realism and Neo-Realism, it is crucial to introduce the concept of the theory of Subaltern Realism and why it has been adopted in this work. The following section highlights how Subaltern Realism can provide a more accurate account of the determining factors behind Saudi foreign policy decisions. The theory of Subaltern Realism emerged in India in the 1980s and was further developed by Mohammed Ayoob in the 1990s. The new approach did not seek to overthrow the main tenets of Realism and maintains the traditional focus on statism, survival and self-help. It is underlined that the realist part of Ayoob’s theory refers to his maintenance of the state both as the reference object of security and the means of security provision. Therefore, it is evident that Ayoob’s theory agrees the basic tenets of the realist philosophy. However, it diverges from previous realist schools, particularly from the scientism of structural Realism, in important respects.

The main claim of Subaltern Realism is that the Neo-realist debate failed to capture the specific circumstances present in the post-colonial world. Subaltern means weak or inferior and the focus of the approach is squarely on the developing world. Ayoob’s analysis of the international system and of the dominance of traditional International Relations theory is that, it has led to a development of inequality. His study notes that to address this inequality, the ‘breaking of the monopoly that controls knowledge demands that we seriously attempt to present a

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conceptual alternative to the dominant theories in International Relations.\textsuperscript{112} This statement by Ayoob underlines his main desire: to provide a conceptual theory that enables an appropriate theoretical understanding of global development that is not dominated by power and inequality. Within this context, Ayoob underlines his aim to create a perspective to help explain ‘the origins of the majority of current conflicts in the international system and the variables determining the domestic and external behaviour of the majority of members of the international society regarding conflict and order, as well as matters of war and peace.’\textsuperscript{113} Here, Ayoob outlines that the perspective focuses on the combination of these two factors to present an enhanced understanding of International Relations and the knowledge of how this impacts on foreign policy.

The approach is best understood as a supplement to traditional realist findings and is not an attempt at a new paradigm. It maintains that neither Classical Realism nor Neo-Realism adequately explains the causes of conflict in the developing world.\textsuperscript{114} Lamy furthers this assessment. His work outlines that Neo-Realism in particular and Neo-realist scholars have been ‘criticised for their inability to explain the end of the cold war and other major transformations in the international system. Neo-realists minimise the importance of culture, traditions, and identity – all factors that shaped the emergence of new communities that helped transform the Soviet Empire.’\textsuperscript{115} Despite the focus on the Soviet Union, the criticism of Neo-Realism is apparent with the belief that it does not take into account identity or culture, two key factors that have been seen to impact Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the state’s history.

Ayoob challenged the wisdom of scientism and the search for universal laws and overarching theory. Instead, he makes references to both Robert Cox and the English school in his appeal for competing perspectives, and the exercise of common judgement.\textsuperscript{116} The mistake of previous realists, he believed, was to think the causes of war were constant and could be divorced from historical context. Such conclusions were based on a specific set of circumstances emerging from the post-Westphalian settlement, and presupposed the existence of relative societal cohesion, exclusive exercise of power by the state, and few external pressures with regard to the consolidation of state power. In doing so, realists neglected to notice that post-colonial states were operating and reacting to a different set of circumstances. Consequently, they failed to identify the real causes of conflict in the developing world.

First of all, the circumstances of much of the developing world meant that the security dilemma needed to be

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 30.
viewed in a new light. Many states inherited arbitrary borders from the colonial period, which separated ethnic
groups or groups with close historic ties and/or created agglomerations of disparate groups. The nature of ethnic
ties meant that power tended to be consolidated in dominant groups, and regimes suffered a consequent lack of
legitimacy and representation. Therefore, the challenge to regime security has in many cases been a domestic
concern, and has sparked movements of irredentism. In the case of the Arabian world, the region was carved up
against Arab wishes, and the dream of Arab unity has been at the root of several regional conflicts. The Sunni/Shia
divide has similarly contributed to internal division.

Furthermore, newly formed states are constantly subject to normative, and potentially physical, intrusion from the
developed world, to a degree that has no historical equivalent in the formation of European nation states. Some of
the main proxy-wars of the cold war, such as Korea and Vietnam, illustrate the conflict between the ambition to
consolidate the state on ethnic and historic lines and a separate agenda connected to balance-of-power politics and
the need to protect against the violation of international borders. These factors led Ayoob to conclude that
historical and regional contexts do matter, and must be investigated in order to understand the nature of conflict in
the developing world. The core principle of the theory is that conditions in the developing world state are
extremely different to those of the industrialised states and therefore needs to be understood within that context.117
Subaltern analysis is now applied to other areas of development including within African studies and Latin
American studies. This is supported by a study by Braveboy-Vagner who indicates that the focus of Subaltern
Realism on domestic elements is vital to the overall understanding of foreign policy development. Her work states
that ‘the introduction of the domestic element (as undertaken by Ayoob) is particularly important for foreign
policy analysts and gives a more complete understanding of the core elements in the creation of foreign policy
within the developing nation context.’118

Mohamed Ayoob has noted that realist approaches, routed in the pursuit of ‘scientism’ have lost a sense of
historical context as well as geography.119 Generalisations of both human nature and the state ignore the fact that
the post-war period was in fact marked by great inequalities between the industrialised and developing world (the
so-called North-South divide), a variable that Ayoob and other Subaltern realist scholars believe to be critical.
Holsti has outlined the irony of this neglect given that Neo-realists have been mostly concerned with security as
opposed to power and therefore have encountered a major oversight in ignoring the domestic construction of

118 J. Braveboy-Vagner. The Foreign Policies of The Global South: Rethinking Conceptual Frameworks. (New York: Lynne Rienner
119 M Ayoob. ‘Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism’. International Studies Review, 4(3),
security dilemmas.\textsuperscript{120}

Ultimately, both Classical and Neo-realist principles fail to incorporate the specific contexts that underline war and peace, including historical and geographic factors. Barnett argues that these theories fail more specifically in their neglect of the ‘basis of observation,’ that is, the source of data. Similarly, the attempt at scientism and the production of universal laws create perspectives, which are generalised and therefore devoid of many critical variables.\textsuperscript{121} According to Cox, ‘all theories have a perspective … [that] derive from a position in time and space … there is accordingly no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in times and space.’\textsuperscript{122} This is not to say that theory itself is not important, and thus does not detract from the earlier explanations of why theory is important, outlined above. Having a theoretical framework remains important, yet looking at Saudi Arabia, for example, its position within the global system is based on its own unique development in the areas of economics, military, religion, and ideology. In other words, whilst theory is important in providing an analytical framework, it should not overlook aspects that may be regionally, or even country-specific. Saudi Arabia’s development is thus also specific to its position, debatably even more important, within the region, and thus should be assessed based on its regional relations and the domestic factors that underpin them. This is not to say that a systemic perspective is not valid. However, Subaltern Realism tackles the issue from an alternative angle. It approaches analysis from a bottom-up rather than top-down (i.e., international), or human-level origin, as is the case with Neo-realist and Classical realist approaches.

There is also an element of pluralism in the Subaltern realist focus on domestic security concerns. The state is still considered the primary unit of International Relations, and the approach differs from pluralism in the context of Foreign Policy Analysis. The state does not contend primarily with non-governmental organisations or pressure groups, but with security challenges to the legitimacy of regimes.\textsuperscript{123} In this manner, Ayoob draws upon a number of theories to create the Subaltern theory of International Relations, aiming to explain the growth and development of developing nation states in this regard. Ayoob makes frequent reference to Hobbes in illustrating overlapping bodies of authority, such as was present in medieval Europe in the competing claims of monarchy, aristocracy and the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{124} Similarly, regimes in the developing world are often faced with competing claims to authority from various ethnic and sectarian groups. Conflict is part of nation building, Ayoob concludes, and dismisses the Neo-liberal claim of absolute gains by way of international cooperation. In fact, he viewed economic

interdependence as a barrier to economic development for most of the developing world and calls it disingenuous to ask poorer states to give up control of economic policy and transcend the Westphalian state prior to the necessary establishment of societal cohesion, economic affluence and territorial satiation.\textsuperscript{125} The current status of the developed world, by contrast, pushes states to seek relative gains.

The major aspects of Subaltern Realism include that the developing world is characterised by the post-war decolonisation process in which new countries emerged and other states were dissolved. In this context, the need for resources and state building is a key characteristic of these states.\textsuperscript{126} The priority of developing world countries is to establish themselves as legitimate political entities. They are, however, currently in transition processes dominated by conflict over religion, ethnicity, language and authority relations that are fragmented.\textsuperscript{127}

Internal challenges are thus as important as those that stem from the international (external) system. Several conflicts in Asia are the result of a weakened structure of the state due to continuous rifts in ethnic and territorial boundaries. Many of these conflicts have a spill over potential.\textsuperscript{128} There are numerous examples of this internal challenge and division that currently exist in Saudi Arabia. For example, there have been historic relationships such as that between the alliance between Mohamed Ibn Saud ‘the ruler of first Saudi state’ and Mohamed Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab ‘the founder of Wahhabi Movement’. This agreement was reached to assist Ibn Saud to establish his own country and in return, Mohamed Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab and his family would have more power in the region. In the current era, the grandsons of Mohamed Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab known as ‘Al ash Shikah’ are the Ulama clerics that help to control the legislative power of the country. The Ulama’s duty is to make sure that no one goes against the will of the government. In this example, the use of internal relationships clearly helped develop Saudi Arabian policy both internally and externally.

Another example of the development of the rift in Saudi Arabia has been the growth of the Saudi alliance with the US, with the Saudis admitting their need for external forms of security due to rifts and disputes in the region. This will be discussed in more detail below although it should be noted that the Saudi authority had invited American troops to liberate Kuwait and to defend its own borders from Iraqi’s troops, which caused public disorder and criticism from the conservatives (inside and outside the Kingdom) who claimed that, this act (inviting the U.S. military) was contrary to Islamic law and tradition.

Another example can be found on the Southern borders and the Saudi influence upon Yemen’s politics. Yemen is

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid. p. 40.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid. p. 30.
considered as one of the most populated states in the Peninsula; less developed but with a population that is heavily armed, tribal, and impecunious. The conflict between the two countries has its roots in the Saudi-Yemen dispute over the borders. In 1934, both sides agreed to sign a treaty delineating the common borders. However, the dispute remains unsolved, as few of Yemeni tribal leaders and scholars have criticised Saudi leaders for intervening in Yemen’s politics. To maintain its influence, Riyadh has established distinct relationships with several Yemeni political and tribal leaders. Furthermore, the Crown Prince, Sultan, in charge of maintaining good relations with Yemen’s tribal and political leaders has set up a special committee to look at Yemen’s needs including the disbursement of regular financial support. This emphasises the nature of the Saudi policy in securing the region, as any changes in political structure or the balance of power in any of its neighbouring countries will have a direct impact on the Saudi regime.

It is thus possible to find numerous examples of these challenges and disputes that involve both international and domestic influences and highlight the importance of utilising Ayoob’s theory for this research. Although the brief discussion of the cases below are not linked to Saudi Arabia, it helps to explain the complex nature of internal and external influences of a country’s domestic and foreign policy in the same region, highlighting the political instability and the interlinked structure of local politics. An external example, but one within the region, is the border regions dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan where Pashtun tribes do not recognise an international boundary. Since its inception, Pakistan has given priority to its security concerns involving external powers in the Pashtun dominated tribal areas. The situation becomes more complex as two of the five military dictators in Pakistan evolved from the Pashtun tribe, and the military has run Pakistan for more than half of its years as an independent state. Since 1979, the constant presence of either one of the two superpowers in Afghanistan is bound to influence Pakistan’s decision making. Situations such as these substantiate the fact that nations have to balance internal and external factors when shaping international policies. In this context also, developing world states may look to external benefactors for resources and support implying that they are singularly weak.

These states will also look to immediate neighbours in order to secure alliances, highlighting the similarities with the other strands of Realism. Alliances are therefore of a temporary nature and stem from security objectives, however unlike the more global reach of Classical and Neo-Realism, Subaltern realist analyses are focused on a more regional basis. Developing world countries thus find themselves focused on achieving short-term relative gains instead of absolute or long-term benefits. Linked to this, the states they choose to ally with will be ones with similar security objectives or similar domestic orientations, for example, alliances in the Middle East between

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130 Ibid.
Sunni-majority or Shi’ite-majority states. Saudi Arabia is a critical example of this given its relations with both the United States (a powerful external benefactor) and with other Gulf countries through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Also, this highlights the continued emphasis on historical context that is state formation occurs within a historical context that differs greatly to that of the West.\(^{133}\) Subaltern Realism has also begun to influence more contemporary writers who support the core concept of Ayoob’s theory, although there is an argument concerning its limitation, as highlighted in this chapter.

The founder of Subaltern Realism added his mark and before publishing *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Ayoob has addressed critical issues of security and foreign policy in preceding literature. His book, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies* provides a more intense discussion on why developing nations like India are more concerned with improving regional affairs than focusing on relationships at international level.\(^{134}\) Theories proposed by Ayoob can be applied to other nations in Africa, South America, and elsewhere. In this context, he explains why India is trying to establish itself as a regional power, and how its neighbours are trying to avert a possible security threat from India. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of religion in policymaking within the Islamic World.\(^{135}\) This work provided a better understanding of how Islam still plays a vital role in shaping foreign relations, even in Malaysia and Turkey.

As far as the third world countries are concerned, scholars seem to realise that the involvement of non-state actors in foreign policymaking is increasing. Similarly, there is a decline of state power due to the effects of globalisation and internationalisation of inter-linked economies.\(^{136}\) Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner has provided multiple suggestions on future of foreign policies in third-world nations. *The Foreign Policies of the Global South: Rethinking Conceptual Frameworks* does not take into account Subaltern Realism, but it can be termed as a compact mini-encyclopaedia of related theories. *International Relations Theory and Third World* is a set of essays written by six well-known scholars who have presented alternative ideas on the analysis of foreign policies in the developing world including a special emphasis on Subaltern Realism.\(^{137}\)

It is also important to compare Subaltern Realism to other theories, as well as the traditionally dominant theories of Classical and Neo-Realism. It is pertinent at this juncture to present a comparison between the perspective of Subaltern Realism and that of the English School of International Relations. A study by Wilson underlined that the


\(^{134}\) M. Ayoob. *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies.* (London: Published under the auspices of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore by Routledge, 1990).


English School has similar foci to that of Subaltern Realism, particularly in analysing the combination of domestic and foreign policy. He notes ‘While order is maintained at the domestic level by the “leviathan”, or government, no such entity exists at the international level. English School theorists answer that institutions are responsible for order.’\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, it is also acknowledged that ‘According to the English School, society is held together at both the domestic and international level by a mixture of coercion, calculation and belief. The most secure and stable societies are those held together mainly by belief.’\textsuperscript{139} This theory therefore aims to decipher the development of a state through domestic and foreign policy but there is one key difference. The English School is a form of Liberal Realism because of its belief that order reigns in international society and that states make up a collectivity of actors that drives an international society of states. This differs from the Subaltern Realism view that bases its theory within the traditional realist perspective, which would discount the significance of any societal dimension to the international system.

\textit{Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy}

This section focuses on providing a brief look at the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, the potential factors that impact it and why it is not necessarily suited to an analysis based in the traditional forms of Realism. As mentioned earlier, the thesis is made up of a number of chapters that look at the following aspects of Saudi foreign policy: Western influence including the important relationship with the United States; the role of Middle Eastern neighbours; and the role of domestic influences including pressures for democratic reform, the role of religion and the various factions within the Saudi elite. The aim of the thesis is to emphasise the inter-linkage between domestic and international factors within the traditional realist approach to International Relations. This realist theory looks at the balance of power in both a regional and global sense, and the centrality of the state.

In particular, the role of Arab nationalism, regional security, geographic location and the role of Islam underpin the creation of Saudi foreign policy and thus its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to Anthony Cordesman, there are important ideological perspectives that link Arabs across the Middle East and these have helped to shape Saudi policy towards Palestinians and Israel.\textsuperscript{140} The critical relationship with the United States is a complex issue. There is an argument that suggests the monarchy continues to be dependent on Islamic clerics in Saudi Arabia, who support the destruction of Israel. Nevertheless, the Saudi Government acknowledges the need for US economic and military support to retain its power in the region.\textsuperscript{141} These attitudes concerning the need for US support are not only reflected in the opinions of the \textit{Ulama} (the clerics), but also within the general public, and

\begin{thebibliography}{15}
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid, p. 2.
\bibitem{141} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
underpin many of its regional relationships. Furthermore, the prioritising of Arab nationalism embodies a larger regional concern for establishing and maintaining strong ties with powerful Arab neighbours.

Though the Saudi leadership has not always displayed policy coherence with these neighbours, leading at various times to inflamed tensions between powerful Arab states in the region, Saudi Arabia’s specific political, geographic and economic advantages, and its commitment to Islamic conservatism, established it as a regional mediator, and, consequently, promoter of Arab unity. Furthermore, with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi foreign policy is guided by the belief that the conflict is rooted in Palestinian grievances. At the core of this is a stance of non-recognition of Israel. Saudi policy towards the Palestinians has resulted in considerable financial and political support, policies that have resulted from and enjoyed significant popular support from the Saudi citizenry.\(^{142}\)

The prioritising of regional security of the Kingdom by ensuring both the stability of the monarchic regime and ‘the safety of petroleum exports’,\(^{143}\) has been the primary determinant of Saudi Arabia’s close ties with the United States, the kingdom’s closest strategic security ally. However, due to close US-Israeli relations, this alliance has engendered domestic and regional tensions, at times, hindering the goal of fostering Arab unity.\(^{144}\) The apparent ideological conflict inherent in the Saudi-US alliance illustrates the range of competing forces that shape foreign policy, such as the kingdom’s economic interests, regional security, and ideological and religious forces represented by Arab nationalist influences. It is clear that significant links exist between internal and domestic factors, with national and religious identity constituting the foundation of the state’s strategies and policies. Even the Saudi-US relationship, which could be described as a counterintuitive alliance, is shown on further examination as one that strategically promotes internal economic and political interests.

There are specific reasons why the analysis of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia is limited when placed within a traditional Classical realist or Neo-realist theoretical framework. It is clear that despite the wide-ranging literature surrounding both Classical and Neo-Realism in academic and policy fields, this researcher believes that they are unable to explain Saudi foreign policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. The analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy is most appropriately judged within the broad theoretical spectrum of Realism. This work has chosen the Realism tradition as the broader framework of the thesis but this dominating theory is limited in explaining and reading the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia and in particular to its behaviour towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this way, the limitations of Realism, in both its Classical and Neo-realist forms are presented here, underlining the


need for a more unique approach. This approach is that of Subaltern Realism and is discussed in detail in the following section. The major problem associated with the neo-realist and Classical realist forms of Realism is that their analysis and assumptions are based within a simpler period of International Relations, and centred on the great powers of the period. Therefore, the development of this view does not take into account the needs of developing nations in modern society, the fact that they are heavily reliant on external allies and that they have competing ideologies that exist domestically.

There are other problems associated with Neo-Realism and its ability to understand and explain key concepts of the international system. First, the development of Neo-Realism and its understanding of the international system (and the role of the state actor within it) have created a paradox. It has been stated by Crawford that Neo-Realism’s ‘systematisation of Classical Realism cements the scientific status of international politics while simultaneously precluding detailed analysis of its substantive political issues.’\(^{145}\) This paradox emphasises that the Neo-realist theory does not allow for a detailed analysis of substantive political issues. However, as can be concluded from this section, it is apparent that the major limitations of traditional forms of Realism is that they do not necessarily take into account the development of states that are themselves developing in the current international system. The realist perspective seems to assess all state actors as powerful countries on a relatively equal footing with its contemporaries. It is perhaps more appropriate to note that ‘Realists do recognise inequalities of power but they do tend to treat all states as like actors thus masking key differences, particular regarding development. This is clearly not the case with countries such as Saudi Arabia that rely heavily on external allies as well as having a divided internal population. Therefore, it is vital to discuss a possible theory that can approach the subject with a method that takes into account these important features of Saudi Arabian society.

The application of the Subaltern Realism theory to the Saudi case is discussed in the next section. The aim is to show that the adoption of a Subaltern realist perspective can help to enhance the knowledge on the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in a much more holistic manner.

**Subaltern Realism in the context of Saudi foreign policy**

Having discussed the major elements and drawbacks of both Classical and Neo-Realism, followed by an overview of the emergence and key texts on Subaltern Realism, this section will outline why this latter theoretical approach holds more water in the applications of its principles to Saudi foreign policy. It will focus on the two major aspects of Subaltern Realism and its application to Saudi Arabia – the impact of domestic factors on international-level decision-making, and the process of achieving security through regional (or neighbourhood) alliances. It should be noted that whilst this section will make use of historical and current examples within Saudi Arabia to illustrate certain points, it is more focused on emphasising the general utility of this particular theory, as specific details will

be further developed in later chapters. The major principle that underpins Subaltern Realism is that developing world states are weak (relative to industrialised states) and are reliant on external benefactors. They are focused on state progress and are thus bound by certain domestic factors that will subsequently impact their relations with other states. In the case of Saudi Arabia specifically, the use of the Subaltern Realism theory enables the researcher to provide a far more useful account of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia in the Arab-Israeli conflict that allows a reflection of the domestic tensions involved, particularly identifying the role of the liberal group in the process.

**Domestic factors**

By the 1980s, Saudi Arabia was in a unique position within the Middle East and international system, specifically due to its large oil reserves.\(^{146}\) This has contributed to the importance placed on it by the United States, which emerged from the Cold War as the global superpower/hegemon, pledging to protect Saudi Arabia militarily if necessary (in essence protecting its own supply of oil). However, whilst in terms of GDP Saudi appears to be a highly developed country in comparison to other developing nations, within the Kingdom there are numerous factors that contribute to domestic turmoil which impacts upon its relations with other states.

A major aspect of this is the line of succession within the royal family and the conflict between reformists and conservatives. The recent death of the Saudi Interior Minister, Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud (the second high-level death in nine months), ‘has only compounded speculation in the Kingdom … about the ageing leadership and about when the succession will switch to a younger generation of princes.’\(^{147}\) Many of the first generation members of the Royal family are in their late 70s and announcements to ‘introduce vitality’ into decision-making has been ridiculed in light of the fact that this would point to the next generation members such as Khalid al-Faisal, the governor of Mecca who himself is in his early 70s.\(^{148}\)

Succession is a theme of constant pressure both internally and externally for Saudi Arabia as the Royal family essentially underpins the country’s relative stability in comparison to other Middle Eastern and North African countries that have gone through significant transformations over the past year. According to Kechichian, this process is not under pressure from a specific group (highlighting the drawbacks in Classical and Neo-realist generalisations of state behaviour), but ‘by time.’\(^{149}\) The sons of Abdul Aziz are ageing and the number of senior Princes is in decline. Whilst there are around 5,000 second and third generation sons waiting to take up government posts, there is as of yet no real process or criteria for how they will be chosen, highlighting an

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\(^{148}\) Ibid.

\(^{149}\) I. Kechichian. *Succession In Saudi Arabia.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). p. 9
important area of potential domestic turmoil in the future.\footnote{Ibid.} Whilst Subaltern Realism is by definition a study of weaker or marginalised elements of global politics, it maintains that elite forces should remain a central point of analysis and this is highlighted by the Saudi situation.

This is but one area within the domestic arena that will have an important impact on policy-making, also due to the divisions within the Royal family between moderates and conservatives. Whilst these issues, including the role of Islam and democratic reform will be discussed to a greater extent in chapter 3 and 4, below, the main elements of how these issues impacts foreign policy will be touched upon here.

Many scholars place the rise of an Islamist opposition in Saudi at the beginning of the 1990s around the time of the first Gulf War (which would make sense given the opposition to the influx of Western troops into the Kingdom during this period). The movement (which should not be exaggerated in terms of how much it can actually impact the government) seeks to transform the socioeconomic and political life of the country and has even gone as far as questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy itself.\footnote{R Dekmejian. ‘The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia’, \textit{The Middle East Journal}, 48(4), (1994), pp. 627-628.} Dekmejian points out that whilst Islamic movements in Arab states against secular regimes are not unusual, Saudi Arabia is a unique case given that the monarchy presents itself as an ‘avowedly Islamic state’.\footnote{Ibid.} Islam thus provides the regime with a means of self-legitimation whilst at the same time providing the major venue for any opposition. This aspect of Saudi’s domestic turmoil thus relates back to the Subaltern perspective in which a major concern for developing states is in becoming a legitimate political entity. In terms of both the role of Islam and the structure of the Royal family and subsequent succession issues, this is a clear element.

\textit{Insecurity and regional relations}

The second part of the theory, which looks at how developing states decide their regional relationships, is also critical in understanding Saudi foreign policy. Subaltern Realism states that these states will align with other regional actors to best fit their security objectives, usually looking to those with which they share characteristics (and based on domestic concerns as outlined above).

The rise to power of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt was an important example from contemporary times highlighting both aspects of forming alliances with states of similar character, in addition to the quest for security. In terms of regional politics, President Morsi made it a key priority to address any concerns that the Saudi regime may have had about his appointment especially given that former President Hosni Mubarak was one of Saudi Arabia’s key allies prior to his downfall. The President thus pledged, ‘not to export Egypt’s revolution, describing the Gulf countries’ security as a ‘red line’ that should not be crossed also making the Kingdom the location of his first
foreign visit.\textsuperscript{153}

But whilst the President sought to placate the Saudis (whose main concern is the threat of domestic unrest in the same style as the Egyptian revolution) it is undeniable that the two countries now share a number of common characteristics including the Muslim Brotherhood’s strict interpretation of Islam and Saudi Wahhabism as well as the neutral criticism both have levelled at Western influence in the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{154} This only serves to emphasise the complexities of relations within the Middle East and North Africa, reflecting Ayoob’s assertion that alliances must be viewed on a regional basis and take into account historical (and current) contexts, i.e. analysis cannot be based on the generalisations of Classical and Neo-Realism.

External threats to Saudi Arabia include: the threat of unrest and conflict in Northern Yemen spilling into the country; domestic and international terrorism; and what some scholars have termed the ‘Shi’a revival’ visible through low levels of Shi’a unrest within the Kingdom. In particular, the threat of terrorism is an example of how Saudi Arabia’s unique relationship with the United States has been extremely costly for the Kingdom in terms of the levels of attention assigned to it by international terrorists, most notably, al-Qaeda.

Saudi’s quest for security is therefore predicated upon maintaining a regional balance of power, focused primarily on balancing against Iran (with whom it has shared a historic rivalry).\textsuperscript{155} Whilst this has tied in with the relationship with the United States, most visible during the Iraq war period,\textsuperscript{156} there are also underlying factors that characterise its regional position, not least the Sunni-Shi’a sectarian tensions that essentially characterise the majority of Middle Eastern inter-state relations.\textsuperscript{157} Saudi support for the U.S. in Iraq (which led to the replacement of a strictly Shi’a government under Saddam); opposition to Iran (a Shi’a powerhouse); and domestic Shi’a unrest particularly in areas geographically close to the Yemen border (also plagued by insecurity) all contribute to this perspective.

The relationship with Iran plus numerous other subjects touched briefly upon in this section will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. The examples here have served to underscore the importance of Subaltern Realism in providing for an explanation of Saudi foreign policy behaviour, especially in light of the limitations of alternative International Relations theories such as Classical and Neo-Realism.

\textsuperscript{153} S. Miller. Oh, Brother. Foreign Policy, (Online, 2012, July 20), para.3.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{157} F Gause III. ‘Saudi Arabia: Iraq, Iran, the Regional Power Balance, and the Sectarian Question’, Vol. 4(2), (March 2007).
Criticisms of Subaltern Realism

The discussion of the Subaltern Realism perspective as outlined by Ayoob has been open to criticism since its development. This was to perhaps be expected, with even Ayoob himself outlining that the theory was incomplete. His study stated that ‘this essay makes several pleas and presents a perspective, but it does not claim to furnish a paradigm capable of explaining the entirety of International Relations to the exclusion of all other perspectives.’\(^\text{158}\)

In this sense, it is apparent that the development of the theory of Subaltern Realism is not complete, but merely an attempt to include more detailed and up to date understanding of global development, International Relations and the attempt to provide greater context in terms of reducing the generalisations that tend to occur. Therefore, through this Ayoob has become an important voice within the field, articulating the argument that mainstream International Relations theory ‘exhibits traces of theoretical imperialism.’\(^\text{159}\) Barnett states that the international history of the developing world has essentially been ignored or overlooked in favour of that of the West and/or Great Powers with the assumption that those experiences would be representative of all states.\(^\text{160}\) There have not been many works in the field on Subaltern Realism and its importance in the development of knowledge regarding developing nations and theory that underpins their actions.

Barnett’s review of Ayoob’s theory is a commonly cited one and he agrees that it is an interesting way to analyse developing nations in the Third World, particularly with the ability to create a theory that specifically focuses on theory building within this. It is important at this point to highlight the key limitations that are associated with this theory. Barnett argues that Ayoob’s theory is not fully developed and does not offer a fuller survey of his proposed discipline. Moreover, Ayoob’s assessment of Subaltern Realism is weak and ‘he fails to demonstrate his claim that Subaltern Realism represents a superior theory for understanding Third World security.’\(^\text{161}\) However, both Barnett and Cicek emphasise that Ayoob’s theory does merit further analysis and development, mainly because his demand for change and the need to assess Third World development independently of traditional and mainstream International Relations theory. Through this, it is apparent that the application of Ayoob’s theory in this study could help to strengthen his claims and the theory of Subaltern Realism, particularly if the findings support the fundamental elements of the theory. Cicek’s work commends Ayoob for his desire to include the developing and third worlds into mainstream International Relations theory, as well as the important stance he took in highlighting the development of inequality because of the exclusion of these states from International Relations theory.

A more recent review of the Subaltern Realism theory by Acharya and Buzan specifies the importance of discovering applicable International Relations theory that is non-Western in its approach because Western

\(^{160}\) Ibid.
\(^{161}\) Ibid, p. 49.
approaches have not offered a successful analysis of International Relations developments in Asia.\textsuperscript{162} Their work notes that Subaltern Realism, although as of yet unproven on a generalised scale, could offer an important alternative theory to Western-dominated forms. However, although these Western theories are certainly not unchallengeable in the region, Subaltern Realism should be considered as ‘pre-theoretical, because it has not been fully exploited or exported to other parts of Asia and beyond.’\textsuperscript{163} This highlights that it is vital that the Subaltern Realism theory (or pre-theory) is further enhanced and tested, hence its use in this study to help answer a question concerning Saudi Arabian foreign policy that cannot be achieved through the application of traditional forms of realist theory. Toygal notes that Ayoob’s study has acknowledged that ‘traditional theories that were developed in at a particular phase of European or Western historical context and purpose fail to engage meaningfully with the world problems of a radically transformed world.’\textsuperscript{164} He goes on to note that ‘the effort of Ayoob to introduce an alternative framework has been criticised for being state-centrist and neglecting the security practice of the non-state actors.’\textsuperscript{165} The criticism highlights that Ayoob remains a state-centric realist. The potential limitations of Ayoob’s theory but due to the failure of traditional realist theories in explaining the actions of developing nations in Asia, it is apparent that using this approach could help to enhance the knowledge of the subject further than has previously been achieved.

Despite the lack of development of Subaltern Realism theory (and the sparse literature on the subject), it is felt that the use of the wider theory of Realism may be the most accurate way of explaining state behaviour in the developing world, whilst Ayoob’s Subaltern strand has complemented the theory by focusing it specifically on specific historical contexts as oppose to universal laws. In contrast to Neo-Realism in particular, Ayoob has critiqued the attempt to apply ‘law-like generalisations on the model of the physical sciences’ arguing instead for ‘more explicit reliance on the exercise of judgment and … greater modesty in our claims for our favoured perspective.’\textsuperscript{166} Often misinterpreted, Ayoob notes in his later work (written in 2002) that he does not mean that ‘rigorous and careful testing of alternative explanations’ should be cast away, simply that universal, scientific laws, as advocated in Neo-Realism, should not ‘be divorced from historical context.’\textsuperscript{167} This is the point that connects Ayoob with the English School of thought primarily and is important to underline this at this juncture.

There are however, limitations and problems associated with the Subaltern Realism theory that need to be taken into account when analysing Saudi Arabian foreign policy. It has been outlined that ‘one of the primary criticisms

\begin{itemize}
\item Ibid, p. 429.
\item Ibid, p. 21.
\item Ibid.
\end{itemize}
of Ayoob’s theory is that it conflates security with the state, and from here, with the regime that rules the state.\textsuperscript{168} This combination of security and state seems to reject the view that the military of a state can help to repress the civilians internally, thereby leading to questions of the legitimacy of the security that takes place within a state. The literature argues that ‘many would agree that Ayoob’s account focuses too heavily on security as defined by state elites in the Third World, and that it is overly permissive in terms of the methods used to achieve security defined on these terms.’\textsuperscript{169} Therefore, the view of security as offered by Ayoob has been compared to the Western viewpoint of security that he has tried to challenge. It is assessed that his presumption that the state is the model for development of security seems to reject the view that the state may actually be imposing an illegitimate form of security on the population. This is perhaps the major problem associated with the theory and will be taken into account when the critical analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy takes place. Through the analysis and critique of Ayoob’s original Subaltern Realism theory, the diagnosis has pointed out that it needs modification. The criticism of the approach is that the perspective does not focus on international factors in the same way that it does with internal factors and this should be amended because of the acknowledgement that in the case of Saudi Arabia, there is clearly factors that impact on foreign policy from both external and domestic forces. Moreover, it is necessary for the approach to focus on all domestic groups instead of simply those that are the most radical groups in society. It is evident from the analysis in the section above that Saudi Arabian foreign policy is affected by moderate reformers (both liberal and Islamist) as well as the radical elements of both parties. Therefore, when addressing the concept of Subaltern Realism within the Saudi Arabia case study, these slight modifications need to take place to enable a more comprehensive assessment of the foreign policy and the factors in Saudi Arabian society that influence it.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the nature of the application of realist approaches to the study of Saudi foreign policy and has pointed out the key limitations of the Classical and Neo-realist approaches in understanding the situation in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it has outlined the key features of the Subaltern realist perspective and indicated the importance of both internal and international influences on the development of Saudi foreign policy.

The use of the Subaltern Realism perspective to analyse the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy based on both domestic and external influences is a key way of helping the research gain a more intricate understanding of the nature of the influences that impact on Saudi Arabian decision-making at the governmental level. It is necessary to conduct the overall analysis of the foreign policy development within the broader theme of Realism.


\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
However, due to the constraints of the Classical and Neo-realist perspectives, the use of the Subaltern Realism approach is underlined as a modern and progressive way of attributing the decisions made to a range of factors and does not simply ignore the important internal factors involved. There are limitations associated with this approach but it is felt that to gain an enhanced understanding of the subject, it is the most effective and suitable approach for this study to employ.

The application of the Subaltern theory enables a more useful and informative analysis of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia in the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular one that can more fully reflect the domestic tensions involved, particularly identifying the role of the liberal group in the process and how this has shaped the foreign policy of the country towards the conflict. Having decided that the perspective of Subaltern Realism is the most appropriate theory within which to conduct this study, Chapter Two looks to substantiate this by analysing the shaping and implementation of domestic and foreign policy in the country through a historical analysis.
CHAPTER TWO

Shaping and implementing Domestic and Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia

Overview

This chapter will provide the historical context for the rest of the thesis, looking to a number of aspects of Saudi foreign policy. The aim for this chapter is to highlight the areas noted more briefly in the previous chapter, which acknowledges that Subaltern Realism is the most appropriate theoretical framework for the thesis more generally. This is related to the major assumption of Subaltern Realism, which is that developing countries (as Saudi Arabia is considered) are generally weak and reliant on external sources for economic and military security, the external source in most cases being an industrialised state. The major relations and interactions of developing states are thus limited to the immediate region particularly in regard to security, and in this context, closest relationships will be between states with similar characteristics.

This chapter will thus seek to underscore the history and basis of Saudi foreign policy. First this will include an overview of the events leading to the establishment of the Saudi state, particularly looking to the interplay of religion and politics over the past century with focus on the Saud-Wahab relationship and the implications this has in terms of the role of Islam in foreign policy decision-making. Secondly, a detailed assessment of the Saudi political establishment will be made, highlighting the varying influences within decision-making, and particularly looking to the role of the monarchy and the Ulama. Lastly, the sources of Saudi foreign policy will be assessed in addition to Saudi’s role in the wider region, looking specifically at the role of the United States (as the external benefactor), and the roles of both Iran and Israel.

This chapter will set out both the most important internal and external variables that impact upon Saudi foreign policy in line with the theoretical framework: Subaltern Realism. It will highlight the fact that Saudi Arabia is tied to the United States as its guarantor of economic and military security; it sees its most critical relations as being with other Gulf monarchies, or those that are Sunni-dominated, and that its security concerns are related to a complex relationship with Israel, and rivalry with Iran that is limited to the immediate region. Whilst Saudi Arabia is important to the United States in terms of oil supplies and Saudi territory as a base for US troops, its influence does not extend to areas of international security, highlighted to an even greater extent by the United States’ so-called pivot to Asia-Pacific which has led to a decreasing focus on Saudi Arabia and the Middle East more generally as the West looks to alternative energy reserves in more stable areas of the world.

171 Ibid.
Establishment of the Saudi State

The Kingdom has faced several threats in its history in which can be divided to three periods. During the first period, 1744-1818, The Kingdom was challenged by a political conflict during the early part of the 18th century. The conflict ended with the establishment of the first Saudi state named after Al-Imam Mohammad Bin Saud, its founder. Unfortunately for Bin Saud, the first Saudi state fell with the attacks of the great Ottoman power and the Egyptian leader Mohammad Ali Basha. In the second period, 1824-1891, the Kingdom suffered from internal and external threats. Internally, conflicts between rival tribes have spread throughout the region, and externally, the Egyptian military have made attempts to topple the Saudi ruling family. In the last period, 1902-present, Saudi Arabia has overcome past external and internal threats and is firmly established as the first new country in the region. King Abdulaziz bin Saud established the second Saudi state, which has remained until the present and

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brought wealth after the discovery of crude oil.\(^ {174}\)

On September 23 1932 King Abdulaziz established the modern state of Saudi Arabia following his conquest of Nejd and the extension of influence over the Eastern coast from Kuwait to Oman.\(^ {175}\) Emerging as a winner in the post-1919 settlements of the Middle East, the al-Saud dynasty embarked on a series of conquests to extend their rule from what was originally the Central Arabian state of Nejd; the overall aim: to control as much of the Peninsula as possible.\(^ {176}\) Whilst Ibn Saud (as the King was known in the West) expanded the territory in his control, some areas remained out of reach including the Yemen, and a number of Gulf States who were under British protection, including Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar). Of critical importance though was a large coastal area ruled by the Hashemite’s, the Hejaz (the holy lands of Mecca and Medina). In the days prior to lucrative oil discoveries, this area would provide a large source of income for the modern Saudi state.\(^ {177}\)

The Kingdom had limited resources to depend on given its landscape was largely made up of desert and the economy was thus dependent on commercial exporting which includes, agricultural crops, handicrafts, livestock trade and of course tourism (pilgrims who came to Mecca and Medina). A major search for water led to the coincidental discovery of oil and soon after, the Kingdom shifted to a new era of industry and fortune and is now ranked as the number one oil exporter in the world. Saudi Arabia holds a 25 per cent share of the total Arab GDP and is the world’s 25\(^ {th}\) exporter/importer, with a foreign trade of US $78 billion.\(^ {178}\)

Modern-day Saudi Arabia is roughly one-third the size of the United States and the same size as all of Western Europe. It occupies an area of about 865,000 square miles of the Arabian Peninsula, and has a unique regional characteristic of lying at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. It borders Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait to the north, Yemen and Oman to the south, and the Persian Gulf, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates to the east. It is separated from Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea by the Red Sea on the west.\(^ {179}\) The Kingdom remains governed by a monarchical system where the King, who also acts as prime minister, has the ultimate power in supervising the protection and defence of the nation. He appoints the Crown Prince and a cabinet, which constitutes members of the Council Ministers who assist him in decision-making. The government rules according to Arabic and Islamic laws as a basic legislative branch, which articulates government’s rights and responsibilities, the Basic System of Saudi Arabia was issued by King Fahd in March 1992 and serves as the country’s constitution.

\(^ {174}\) Ibid.
\(^ {177}\) Ibid.
It includes provisions declaring Islam the official state religion, of which Quran and Sunnah. The Basic System of government identifies the nature of the state, its goals and relationship between the ruler and citizens and most importantly, it identifies the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an Arab and Islamic sovereign which are the two priorities reflected in its internal and external political policies.\textsuperscript{180} When it comes to foreign relations, the main relations include being a founding member of United Nations, League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic conference, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Participation in UN specialised agencies, the World Bank, the Nonaligned Movement, and Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

\textit{Historic Role of Islam}

Saudi Arabia’s history and current position in the region, however, cannot be separated from the role of Islam within the state and its historical context. Its origins date back to the mid-18\textsuperscript{th} century when a local tribal leader in Central Arabia, Muhammad Ibn Saud, the founder of the first Saudi state, gave refuge to a Muslim scholar from a nearby village that had been expelled for preaching an Islamic orthodoxy that criticised local practices.\textsuperscript{181} That scholar was Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab and his strict interpretation of Islam, known, as ‘Wahhabism’ is central to the Saudi state today.\textsuperscript{182} Ibn Saud became the political leader as Ibn Abdul Wahhab became the supreme religious authority and spiritual leader. They both became allies and put together a joint plan; from 1745 they planned a jihad campaign to conquer and purify Arabia. After the death of Ibn Abdul Wahhab in 1792, Ibn Saud assumed the title of imam therefore the Saudi leaders have been recognised as Wahhabi imams and religious figures gaining an element of religious authority in the regime.\textsuperscript{183}

The late eighteenth century thus saw the unison of the al-Saud family with the Wahabi movement in a rebellion against Ottoman rule over Arabia, although this was later quashed by Egyptian forces in 1818. Wahabbism as an ideology re-emerged in the early twentieth century under the leadership of Abd al-Aziz bin Saud who used his alliances with the Wahhabi tribes in Najd in order to consolidate his power over what he would establish as Saudi Arabia as we know it in the modern age (as mentioned above). According to one scholar, the rebellions led by Wahabbis in both the eighteenth and twentieth century’s involved a lot of bloodshed, related to indiscriminate slaughter and terror of both Muslims and non-Muslims. This led to scholars of alternate Islamic schools of thought.


\textsuperscript{181} M Al-Rasheed. \textit{A History of Saudi Arabia}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 120.


Despite this, the movement survived and thrived in contemporary Islam and modern-day Saudi Arabia for a number of reasons, the first being that through the treatment of Muslim Ottoman rule as a foreign occupying power, the movement was able to consolidate Arab self-determination and autonomy as a critical ideology, an aspect that still permeates decision-making today. Wahhabism essentially rejected ‘historical baggage’ looking only to the origins of Islam (emphasised by their literalist interpretation). Aside from this, the discovery and exploitation of oil provided the country more generally with high liquidity, particularly following the 1975 oil embargo, a critical moment in Saudi’s foreign policy history. This boost in power status within the region similarly encouraged the promotion of Wahhabi thought as a tool of Saudi influence around the Muslim world.

A diplomatic report from Sir Harford Jones, British Resident in Baghdad dispatched in 1791 provides a critical outlook on the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia particularly regarding the actual phrase ‘Wahhabi’ which is perceived to be derogatory as the movement in fact refers to themselves simply as ‘true Muslims’.\footnote{185 \textit{M. A Khan}. ‘A Diplomat’s Report on Wahhabism of Arabia’. \textit{Islamic Studies}, 7(1), (1968), pp. 33-46.} This misinterpretation of the movement that continues today, particularly among Western scholars, highlights the complexities inherent in the study of Saudi domestic and foreign policy, and essentially brings us back to the underlying theoretical framework of Subaltern Realism which focuses heavily on unique historical contexts. Leading from this, one scholar has outlined the fact that despite ‘the symbiosis between royal power and religious puritanism forged in the mid-18th century,’ the regime has also faced continued domestic threat from Islamic militants.\footnote{186 \textit{H Dekmejian}. ‘The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia’. \textit{Middle East Journal}, 48(4), (1994), pp. 627-643.}

Examples of this include challenges mounted by the King’s Ikhwan warriors in 1929; and a religious protest led by Prince Khalid bin Musaid in the mid-1960s, a response to King Faisal’s incremental modernisation programme.\footnote{187 \textit{J Piscatori}. \textit{Ideological Politics in Saudi Arabia}. (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983).} In 1979, the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca represented probably the most serious threat yet though as it set into motion a ‘new wave of Islamist fervour that emerged a decade after’ the event.\footnote{188 \textit{J Kechichian}. ‘Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia’. \textit{The Muslim World}, 80(1), (1990), pp. 9-12.} This new group of militants were young, middle-class, and urban-based, led by an elite group of religious scholars based out of the country’s universities. By the 1990s, this had divided the country creating controversy between the Islamists and the liberals, highlighted through a range of scholarly and religious public exchanges.

Following the release of a fatwa justifying the presence of American (non-Muslim) troops on Saudi territory, Islamist scholars responded with statements accusing leading scholars of being secularist and even infidel
These accusations were rejected through a number of essays written by Ghazi Abd al-Rahman al-Qusaybi, inviting the Islamists to prove their accusations in the Shari’a court. Qusaybi further compared the Islamists to the leaders of Iran, slamming the Islamists justification of violence and objectives to take over the government. This led to the creation of the consultative system in July 1997, through which a new Majlis al-Shura was established, a surprise to many both within Saudi and in the West. The result of a decade-long process of institutionalising consultation, the move by King Fahd represented a ‘major broadening of the Saudi consultative process.’ This has however, still been justified through religious grounds, for example, some scholars relate the concept of shura (consultation) to the Quranic reference ‘amruhum shura baynahum’ which translates as those who conduct their affairs [of governance] by mutual consultation.

The consultative process has not been a smooth process though and has varied throughout history, from the eight-man membership in 1927, to the expansion to 20 under Prince Faisal. This was further expanded to a membership of 25 in 1956 under King Saud; however its functions were later transferred to the Cabinet. While later rulers promised to establish a Majlis, King Fahd appeared as a reformer, establishing the Council in September 1992, naming a conservative religious scholar (Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Jubayr) as Chair and appointing no less than 60 members to serve. This move was critical not only in addressing the rising tensions between liberals and Islamists, but similarly in relieving the inner impact between the two groups after the First Gulf War (this will be discussed below).

Aside from the role of Islam, Arab solidarity or nationalism has similarly played a role in Saudi foreign policy-making as will be described in more detail in the following sections. This relates also to the countries’ history, not least due to the influence of the creation of Israel in 1948, but also due to Iran’s occupation of the Gulf Islands, Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb in 1971, and the unilateral peace deal made by Egyptian President Sadat to Israel in 1977—all of which presented divisive issues for the Arab world. Saudi’s Muslim Arab culture in addition to its geographic centrality within the region also contributes to this sense of Arab nationalism, which is also underpinned by a single natural source of wealth—oil. These factors will be explored in more detail in the later sections of this chapter, especially as an underlying source of foreign policy decision-making.

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191 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
Internal Policy

The kingdom’s political system: decision-making and organisation

The Kingdom is governed by the Saud monarchy whereby the King also acts as Prime Minister and holds ultimate power over the protection and defence of the nation. He appoints the Crown Prince and Cabinet constituting the members of the Council of Ministers, who in theory are supposed to assist in the decision-making process. In reality, this process is often conducted in a much more secret way within specific factions of the Royal Family in order to maintain discretion. Disagreements between these various Royal factions are widely acknowledged both within and outside the Kingdom yet are rarely aired in public given the restrictions on media.199

As mentioned above, the legislative branch is run according to Arabic and Islamic laws as issued by King Fahd in March 1992 and asserts that Islam is the official state religion, governed by the Constitution which consists of the Quran and Sunnah. Overall, all branches of the system (executive, legislative and judicial) underscore the fact that the Kingdom is an Arab and Islamic sovereign state—major priorities as reflected in its internal and external policies.200 The political system is divided into four main sections: the Council of Ministers, Majlis al-Shura, Legal and Judicial Structure, and the Provincial System. The Council is the main executive organ of the Saudi system, created in 1953 shortly before King Abdulaziz death. It consists of the King, the crown Prince, three royal advisers who hold official positions as ministers of state without portfolio, five other ministers of state and the heads of the twenty ministers. Most of the high ministerial positions were limited to members of the royal family but in 1992; about 75 percent of the Ministers were of commoner backgrounds.201

The Majlis Al-Shura operates as the Legislative body that provides the King with advice on issues of importance. The Council currently consists of 150 members appointed by the King for a four-year renewable term based on their experience. They are assigned to one of twelve committees that deal with human rights, education, culture, information, health and social affairs, services and public utilities, foreign affairs, security, administration, Islamic affairs, economy and industry, and finance. The members of the council are able to initiate legislation and review domestic and foreign policies of the government. Unapproved actions conducted by governments will be referred back to the King who has the power to appoint and dismiss both Ministers and Council members and has the power to reconstruct the Council, reorganise it, and appoint a new one whenever he desired.202 However, in 2004,


the mandate of the Council was broadened to include proposing new legislation and amending existing law without prior submission to the King. On April 7, 2003, the Council became a full member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.203

The political divisions have no political leaders or parties as the political system is authoritarian and forbids public speech and activities by the law and imposes sanctions against any attempts of such actions. Still, with the political changes of the Kingdom, a new Allegiance Commission created by royal decree in October 2006 established a committee of Saudi princes that will play a role in selecting future Saudi kings, but the new system will not take effect until after Crown Prince Sultan becomes king.204 The succession question and the resilience of the regime particularly throughout the Arab Spring that has toppled governments (or at least shaken them) elsewhere has been the subject of much debate recently.

Analysis from 2004 argues that in fact the Kingdom is much more fragmented than is oft thought, divided between the influences of the four (or five) most powerful Princes, especially (at the time of writing), Crown Prince Abdullah (who became King in 2005) and his half-brother Nayef (the former Interior Minister who died on 16 June 2012).205 Whilst in 2004, questions over which Prince would receive the Kingdom abounded given the popularity of Abdullah in America against Nayef’s influence at home; Doran argues that several other domestic factors also place the Kingdom in ‘the throes of a crisis.’ An economy that is unable to keep pace with population growth, a deteriorating welfare state, and regional and sectarian tensions all contribute to this analysis, while this source seem dated but it still can be applied to the current situation.206 Yet on the other hand, Saudi has remained relatively unscathed by the popular uprisings that have hit many other Middle East and North African states.

There are two points that stem from this: firstly, the underlying context of this thesis—Subaltern Realism, which points to a county’s historical and geographic (i.e. unique) standing in the region. The Arab Spring more generally and the variety of differences between countries have highlighted this aspect of the theory most acutely, particularly from the realist standpoint through which Saudi has remained a dominant (if not hegemonic) regional power. Secondly, there is obviously the question of why Saudi has maintained its power base. According to Stares, this relates to money, as not a single oil regime has fallen in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region (bar Libya which had Western military help); networks; and the disunity of the opposition.207 In terms of

206 Ibid.
networks, the Saud monarchy has made this a critical aspect of confounding power. Various princes are assigned specific portfolios in order to deal with specific groups which have led to the creation of networks within the business community, within the tribal structures, within the intellectuals, ‘with every group that you can imagine’ and these were activated during the Arab Spring.\textsuperscript{208}

The issue of succession however lies at the very top of these networks, arguably posing the biggest threat to stability, that is, from above as opposed to from below. As consideration is being given to the next generation of princes (which number in the hundreds), major upheaval is expected within the House of Saud.\textsuperscript{209} This relates to: ‘a complex interplay between seniority, competency, and intra-familial politics’ and cannot be overstated in terms of its significance as the senior members of the al-Saud family are all burdened by old age.\textsuperscript{210} This is highlighted by the death of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdelaziz in October 2011 following a long period of illness. This triggered the succession of his brother Prince Nayef to the position of Crown Prince (and therefore presumed heir), which in itself led to the resignation of other family members in protest. However, Prince Nayef, himself also succumbed to illness in June 2012 (as mentioned), which then led to the appointment of Prince Salman Bin Abdelaziz as Crown Prince. These changes have also had serious implications for the Interior and Defence ministries highlighting the widespread effects of succession issues on the Kingdom more generally.\textsuperscript{211}

\textit{Lack of strategic planning}

This is to a large extent an underlying theme throughout this chapter highlighted by challenges faced in the succession arrangements, that is, replacements are at the moment made on an extremely ad hoc basis, related to other elderly members of the ruling family and their current position. This has thus resulted in a precarious situation in which the future could be marred by infighting within the Royal Family, and therefore remains a critical issue that needs to be developed into a coherent and sustainable strategy.

There are many other examples of policies within Saudi Arabia, which also highlight this nature of its governance. In Hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca), many projects have been planned to make the pilgrimage easier, yet such projects are only aimed to benefit the following Hajj season, as opposed to developing a long-term strategy for both utilizing the economic benefits of the Hajj whilst also dealing with security issues, and allowing Muslims from across the globe to peacefully gather at a most sacred location. Similarly, in the Saudi education system, King Abdullah has extended the opportunities for students to apply for scholarships and funding that will allow them to

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
attain university-level education\textsuperscript{212}; yet the underlying condition is a job market unable to cater for the many new graduates every year.\textsuperscript{213} This again highlights the implementation of short-term policies aimed at gaining support quickly, yet at the same time undermining future stability.

Many of these short-term policies relate to the fact that economic revenue is based on the Hajj and the country’s large petroleum supplies. Government rhetoric has asserted that long-terms strategies are being negotiated and are even in place yet the facts on the ground highlight a much more nuanced story. This is often also linked to official corruption, for example, when floods devastated parts of Jeddah in 2011, contractors asked to rebuild were found to be carrying out the work for much less money than was officially stated with much of the fund going into the pockets of local government officials.\textsuperscript{214} Corruption is widespread among many Saudi economic sectors, not least within the oil industry.

The oil industry itself may in fact represent the biggest example of this short-term/relative gain scenario as according to one scholar, oil production in Saudi Arabia represents a ‘function of Saudi Arabian estimates of how its oil reserves may provide long-term revenue and political stability at the risk of short-term economic gains.’\textsuperscript{215} This has been even more the case as King Abdullah has looked to make sure that unrest that has hit other Arab countries does not spread to the Kingdom—his solution being typically short-term—announcing $130 billion of extra-budgetary spending in spring 2011.\textsuperscript{216} King Abdullah was able to make this decision given the country’s continued economic prosperity thanks to its substantial oil wealth. The underlying problem remains though that as with the examples noted above, that is, in the political and societal arenas, these policies are unsustainable and need to be replaced with a long-term strategy for survival. As will be highlighted throughout this chapter, Saudi’s foreign policy is also a careful balance between competing factions, powers, and ideologies, ultimately centred on the survival of the monarchy.

**The Domestic Impact of Islam**

The most significant reason for establishing the Shura Council was to introduce planned reforms, which do not go beyond Islamic traditions and boundaries, and to provide an institutional framework through which the traditional form of Saudi Arabian government can be most effectively expressed in order to keep up with rapid changes in the


This highlights the level of importance extended to the role of Islam within the Kingdom, also emphasised by the legal and judicial structure, which is based on Islamic law. The legal system consists of three main parts; the Sharia Courts that hear most cases in the Saudi legal system. It has several categories: Courts of the First Instance, Courts of Cassation and the Supreme Judicial Council. The rulings and decisions taken by the Court are on the basis of what is stated in the Quran and the Sunnah. The third source is Ijma, the consensus of opinion of Muslim scholars on the principals involved in specific case occurring after the death of the Prophet. Underlying the judicial structure are the four schools of thought in Islamic law which include the Hanbali School, the Shafii School, the Hanafi School and the Maliki School. The court does not limit itself with a specific opinion of any one of the mentioned schools of law. Qias, analogy, is the fourth source of law.

The Saudi government has been consistently accused of being responsible for extremism, bias between sexes, and discrimination, to comply with the Islamic teachings. These claims are reasonable since they reflect the many social, political and educational conditions people undergo under the Saudi regime such as human rights violations. As we have reviewed the internal sources of political power it is also important to bring to light the sources which submit religious interpretations that direct the four political divisions and which laws are derived from. It is true that the King has the ultimate power in decision-making, but in fact, as illustrated in figure 2, the King must comply with the religious power in many occasions to ensure his survival. The historical background to the religious context in Saudi Arabia has already been outlined in the previous section and from this we can draw some further analysis. The Ulama (the Muslim legal scholars and the clerics) have thus attained power in the Kingdom as a result of the support they have provided to the regime in times of turmoil, for example, during the attacks on the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979.

Similarly, in 1994, a fatwa was issued by Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz who declared it imperative for ‘good’ Muslims to ‘destroy faxes arriving from the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights,’ an anti-regime Islamist organisation based out of London. This was backed duplicate or distribute pamphlets from the group. Both of these statements were clear attempts to use religion in order to counter the threat to the Kingdom from

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220 F Farsy. op.cit. p. 75.
222 Ibid.
Islamic militants. Overall, as noted, the Ulama accept the legitimacy of the Saud regime due to by Sheikh Mohammad al-Uthaymin who similarly noted it a ‘sin to their compliance with Sharia which includes regular consultation. In other words, there is a trade-off between the establishment clerics and the monarchy—a compromise which underpins not only domestic policy, but the Saudi approach to the region, and the world.

According to an International Crisis Group report, the closed nature of the Saudi political system caused groups to engage in terrorist violence since they have little interest in free elections or greater political participation. Though the government has acknowledged such results after 9/11 and begun to perform social, political and educational reforms; the regime showed a contradictory stance by harassing reformers and limiting public debate and blocking initiatives it does not control. Elizabeth Rubin, a New York Times journalist, has also reported on the regimes fierce rejection of any kind of anti-regime political activities. Dr. Tawfiq al Khusayer, a Saudi engineering professor and veteran reformist and several other prominent reformists have thus authored a petition which was delivered to Crown Prince Abdullah in 2004, seeking to transform the Kingdom into a constitutional monarchy. They decided to gather and set up their own independent human rights organisation after the Saudi government formally announced the country’s first National Commission on Human Rights.

The Minister of Interior, Prince Nayef was enraged by the petition and sent the police to round up several prominent reformists. Furthermore, a lawyer and rights advocate, Abdul Rahman Alahim was jailed after his appearance on al Jazeera network accusing the government of violating human rights by arresting people for their opinions. The notable thing about the incident is that it was followed by Colin Powell’s visit to the Kingdom.

just a few days later. This sent out the signal that even though the royal family adheres to American pressure for the regime to open up, it still needs to keep its posture of independent authority to the liberals and that it is not threatened by America, at the same time, their contradictory stance sends a message to the Wahhabi establishment that their speeches about reform do not necessarily mean submission or acceptance to American demands. The International Crisis Group report of the Middle East, suggests a political reform agenda to end internal corruption and extremism which are all considered as results of the regime: broadening public space, giving citizens the right to have a voice in the system and strengthening political institutions such as al Shura Council.228

The rise of the Wahhabi movement within Saudi Arabia has been ‘underestimated, overlooked, or misunderstood’ by many Western analysts.229 This has then led to a failure to predict many of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policies, as will be discussed below, including the oil embargoes of the 70s, anti-Americanism during the Kuwait war, and even the rise of the Taliban.230 According to Obaid: ‘government decisions can often be best understood with reference to the power of the Ulama and from the conservative masses from which that power derives.’231 It is the belief of many that the Saudi elite make only rhetorical attempts at targeting the extremism that often stems from Wahhabism, mainly aimed at deterring anti-Saudi opinion within its most supportive partners—particularly, the United States. Despite these vague efforts, ‘al-Qaeda would not exist absent Saudi money and membership’ highlighting not only the inter-linkage between the Saud monarchy and the Ulama, but also the subsequent linking to more extreme sections of the religious elite that again are able to impact foreign policy.232

As noted above, this is also linked to the Ulama’s experience and skill in mobilising a conservative public. This has at times been through driving anti-Americanism, yet has often been contradictory related to the requirements of the regime. For example, during the first Gulf War, a fatwa was issued stating that American troop presence was justified, as ‘they are here to defend Islam.’233 This is directly related to the acknowledgement that the Ulama’s material wellbeing depends on the survival of the Al Saud regime. The royal family also realises that a country without the Wahhabi clerics and their religious legitimacy would pass on to a theocracy or hierocracy of the non-establishment clerics causing the abolition of Saudi Arabia. These consequences for both sides keep them together.

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231 Ibid.


Foreign policy priorities

Saudi Arabian foreign policy operates under the aegis of four key priorities: Regional Security, Arab Nationalism, Islam, and the political economy of oil. Each aspect of Saudi foreign policy operates in a more or less straightforward, symbiotic fashion. The concept of Arab nationalism goes hand in hand with regional concerns, since the ultimate aim is one of Arabian unity, the plight of Palestinians and the conflict with Israel. Finally the prioritising of Islam, which is a matter of particular strengths to Saudi Arabia since it embraces within its borders Islam’s two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. Furthermore, Islam has provided the Kingdom a basis on which it can look for allies and leadership among Muslim nations, Arab and non-Arab.

Arab Nationalism and the Monarchy

Saudi Arabia has had considerable difficulty in balancing its own national interests with a general stability between them and other Arab states. Fluctuating relations with Iraq and Iran provide some notable examples of this. During the 1960s and 70s, Saudi Arabia maintained suspicions of Iraq’s involvement with anti-Saudi activity throughout the Middle East. This galvanised their position with surrounding states like Kuwait and Qatar, whom Saudi Arabia was able to convince of growing Iraqi radicalism. However, Saudi-Iraq relations became more cordial by 1979, based on a mutual position of distrust over Iranian advocacy of exporting Islam. This came as a result of the Iranian-Islamic Revolution of that year. Iranian Islamic policy called for the deposition of all non-Muslim monarchies, and as such posed a real threat to the Arab regime and specifically to Monarchical Arab countries, since the Islamic leader of Tehran at the time, Khomeini, considered a monarchical system as un-Islamic. Therefore, it presented a real threat to Saudi Arabia, not only to its own security but also to their conception of a single Arab Nationalist consensus.

Indeed, whilst Saudi Arabia favours Arab nationalism, it does not believe in a single Arab state (pan-Arab caliphate). Rather, it proposes a negotiation towards solidarity on regional and international issues, coupled with respect for the individuality of each state. This position has prompted frequent ideological clashes with neighbour states, intellectuals, religious leaders and so forth. Iran’s actions were a vocal example of this, interpreted by the Saudis as a move towards dominance over Arab states. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia gave Iraq non-military (that is, financial, moral) support during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. It has been estimated that Saudi

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235 *In spite of divided opinion between Arab states as to what Arabian unity should comprise, one can safely contend that in general, unity of one kind or another is a shared priority. This will be discussed later in the chapter.
238 H Metz. op.cit. p. 248.
Arabia provided Iraq with US$25 billion in low-interest loans and grants and assisted with the construction of an oil pipeline to transport Iraqi oil across its territory during the conflict. All this was conducted under a banner of neutrality presumably adopted so as to minimise further instability between them and Iran-supportive Arab states.

On the other hand, many analysts point to the role of the incumbent King as a driver of foreign policy whilst still noting the opaque nature of Saudi politics more generally, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. Whilst the country is renowned for its rigid socio-political system, the term *islah*, (reform) has been a key in assuaging both foreign and domestic complaints. Deputy Prime Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz promised real political reforms particularly related to elections. The tensions between foreign and domestic policy as both remain inherently intertwined are also beginning to impact Saudi’s role in the region and globally. This is seen to the greatest extent in the interplay between the *Ulama* and the monarchy, and the United States and the monarchy (the latter of which challenges ideas of Arab nationalism).

Senior members of the Royal Family have also been critical in foreign policy making even in cases where an official position is not filled. An example of this is the use of Prince Turki al-Faisal (former Intelligence Chief) in NATO Middle East intelligence gathering operations, the latest of which included briefings on Saudi opinions on a nuclear-free Middle East Zone (but that he also noted would not be possible should Iran gain the nuclear bomb). Similarly, another group of scholars note that whilst large focus is on Saudi’s hard power (articulated via its massive oil wealth); the role of its soft power, particularly in times of Middle Eastern transition, should not be underestimated and could be extremely beneficial in both its international behaviour, and in placating domestic concerns. From a foreign policy standpoint, the role of senior Royal members who may not hold official positions within the government, but who are recognised around the world may be a critical aspect of this soft power strategy through diplomacy.

One scholar has also outlined the belief that the events of the Arab Spring will distract attention away from a conventional war between the Arab states and Iran (a critical driver of modern-day Arab nationalism). An expanding arms race between the two ‘power blocs’, Iran’s ambiguous nuclear goals, and the ‘unprecedented level

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240 Ibid.
241 H Metz. op.cit. p. 238.
of uncertainty in the region’ have contributed to growing unease (and a sense of Arab solidarity among some states including Saudi Arabia) that raises the probability of a much broader crisis—a third Gulf War.\textsuperscript{247} The monarchy within Saudi Arabia is thus in a critical position to prevent revolutionary movements both external to, and within their borders, an effort that has been conducted via leadership changes, institutional changes, and wider reforms, as noted. The death of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud has been a crucial event in this unfolding situation, resulting in a ‘reshuffling of the cards within the ruling family, with ripples going through the Kingdom’s political structure’ and creating changes that could ‘affect the Kingdom’s domestic and foreign policies in the years to come.’\textsuperscript{248}

**The role of Ulama**

What we may identify in trends towards the demonisation of Muslims is the most recent instance of Said’s ‘Orientalist’ discourse, where by the East is crudely ‘domesticated for local, European use’.\textsuperscript{249} In the early stages of Colonialism this was manifest in notions of exoticism, sexual allure and mystery; the stereotype of the Arab seen in texts like *1001 Nights*. At all times, this was largely a product of Western imagination, a byword for prejudice. In current discourse, the ‘domestication’ of the Arabian figure has altered to create an austere, ruthless threat to Western existence. It is an image bound in notions of freedom and constraint, of an attack on civil liberties and systems of government. Thus, it cannot evade being politicised. The role of the *Ulama* thus extends to foreign policy decision-making and Saudi’s wider regional relations.

In the 1950s and 60s King Faisal promoted religion as the alternative ideology to Arab nationalism, highlighting the contradictions between these two forces related to whichever threat the Kingdom is facing at the time. Faisal established the Muslim World League in 1962 and the Organisation of Islamic Conferences in 1967, both of which remain headquartered in Mecca and Jeddah, respectively, today. This continued presence ‘ensures excessive influence for the Kingdom’s Wahhabi interpretation of Sunni Islam within the wider Muslim community.’\textsuperscript{250} Whilst also impacting the general public of Saudi Arabia, the *Ulama*, particularly through powerful (and well-funded) groups such as those mentioned above, have been able to successfully play a role in Saudi foreign policy for more than fifty years to varying effect.

An example of this is, as has been mentioned, the role of the *Ulama* in the first Gulf War, in August 1990. As Saddam Hussein’s troops entered Kuwait, also massing on the Saudi border, King Fahd took the decision to invite


foreign troops onto Saudi territory, the majority being American, British and French. According to Obaid, Fahd had to maintain a consensus upon making this decision in which case ‘it was necessary to make serious concessions to the Ulama.’ The most senior clerical leaders were not only consulted on the actual decision, but were also critical in placating domestic public opposition to the troop movement. It was after long discussions with Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz that the Ulama more generally ‘reluctantly’ accepted the decision although on the basis that the King provides the clerical leadership with solid evidence of an external threat (delivered in the form of US-provided satellite images of Iraqi troop movements). The result was the joining of 350 Islamic leaders in Mecca who following a debate among them, issued the fatwa stating the following:

‘Even though the Americans are, in the conservative religious view, equivalent to non-believers as they are not Muslims, they deserve support because they are here to defend Islam.’

As noted though, King Fahd made several concessions to gain this approval of sorts offering assurances that non-Muslim soldiers would respect the Kingdom’s traditions and that they would leave as soon as the threat was eradicated. A specific concession was the increase in authority extended to the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and Propagation of Virtue (also known as the ‘morality police’). Five years later the King stated: ‘Many said that the presence of foreign forces was wrong. But I say ... it was [a case of] extreme necessity.’

In the present day, the role of the Ulama remains as important (and as complicated) as ever, particularly given turbulence elsewhere in the region. This has been highlighted through an alleged government ban on clerics sending funds to opposition groups in Syria. On 29 May 2012, Arabic press reports outlined a summons from King Abdullah to the most prominent Salafi clerics in the country in order to ban them from soliciting donations for Syria’s opposition groups, over fears that funds may inadvertently reach the increasing number of jihadist groups fighting the al-Assad regime. This also comes amid increasing tensions over the King’s domestic reform process which has been met with heated opposition from the clerical establishment (and resulted in the dismissal of the Head of Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) and also known as Al-Haya or the religious police.

The role of the United States

In supporting Iraq during their conflict with Iran, Saudi Arabia may have hoped to establish a lasting friendship


252 Ibid.


254 Ibid.


with their old rivals. However, such was not the case. Only two years after Tehran and Bagdad ceased hostilities, Iraq made a surprise invasion of Kuwait. From Saudi Arabia’s vantage point, this posed a greater threat than the possibility of Iranian aggression. Fears of a single Arab state dominance had effectively transferred from Iran to Iraq.\footnote{A Cordsman. \textit{Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century: Foreign Relations and External Security}, (California: Greenwood Publishing Group, chapter 2, 2003), p. 56.} As a result, Saudi Arabia was forced to compromise its position of Arab interests via active collaboration with the U.S. government, whose military intervention prompted the Gulf War of 1990. Though Saudi Arabia had conducted an economic, oil-based relationship with the U.S. since 1945, the two nations had always been more seriously divided over the issue of Israel. In this matter, the Saudi position is unequivocal, and stands in unity with all Arab states opposed to the existence of Jewish Israel within Arab-dominated Palestine. The United States, however, had played their part in the initial U.N. foundation of Israel in 1947, and thus remain a pro-Israel nation. In colluding with them, Saudi Arabia was forced to compromise both its Arab nationalism, and its Islamic allegiances in favour of removing what was perceived as a more immediate threat.\footnote{N Rashid & E Shaheen. \textit{Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War}, (Riyadh: International Institute of Technology, 1992), pp. 179.} It was the first time Saudi Arabia had been in conflict with another Arab nation since their invasion of Yemen in 1934. This put forward a highly undesirable image of the Saudis actively subverting Arab solidarity by cooperating with non-Arab forces.

In 1945, from the mouth of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), the Arab nations were ensured two things: that America’s policy of Palestinian support would not alter without thorough consultations, and that no U.S. aggression would be vested on the Arabs. Also, Roosevelt ensured safety and security to the Kingdom and the lead arm supplier as long as it provides the U.S. with secure access to cheap oil.\footnote{M Klein & A McIntyre. \textit{September 11, Contexts and Consequences: An Anthology} (Copy Central, 2001), p. 276.} However, within two months, FDR died, and President Truman came to power with a wholly different resolution. This was based on a new support for the Israeli cause, albeit on transparent ground of self-preservation. As Truman himself put it, with no small measure of glibness: ‘I’m sorry gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds and thousands of people who are anxious for the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs as constituents’.\footnote{D Hirsh. ‘Saudi Arabia and The Conflict’, \textit{Journal of Palestinian Studies}, 3(2), (1974).}

The bitterness this prompted in the Saudi Arabian people was, however, mitigated by other, more immediate concerns. For one, is the American interest in known oil reserves present in Saudi Arabia. In the mid-seventies these represented about 38 per cent of the world’s known oil supply. The threat of Communism was also a cause for union. During the Cold War, Saudi-American relations were strengthened further by a mutual suspicion of Soviet activity. In America’s case this was a purely political matter, whereas the Saudis took issue on religious grounds, based on Communism’s atheist stance. This led to the 1951 Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement, in accordance with which the United States provided military equipment and training for the Saudi armed forces. As an upshot, America was also able to establish a permanent United States Military Training Mission in the
For a notable while it seemed as though Saudi-American relations were on the proverbial ‘up-and-up’. However, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Saudi ruler Faisal withdrew his nation’s oil from world markets, in protest over Western support for Israel. It was rumoured by some that Truman’s old betrayal was a major factor for such actions. In any case, the act quadrupled the price of oil and led directly to the 1973 energy crisis. This placed considerable strain on American relations. And yet, Faisal was still able to maintain an ultimately positive relationship with the States, based on his overriding hatred of Communism.

Through the 70s and 80s, a number of controversies threatened United States arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Some members of Congress raised issue with the sales on the grounds that such weaponry might be used against the Israelis. Ultimately, a cessation of weapons sales was brought into effect, contributing to Saudi suspicions of Israel’s undue influence in Washington. The resultant cessation served to embitter the Saudis, worsening relations with America, whom they felt would not uphold their security to the same level they had.

The first Gulf War however, again led the Saudi’s to believe that America was acting in their favour, dispatching more than 400,000 troops to the kingdom to ward off potential aggression. However, after the war Saudi Arabia once again met with the fact that Congress would not receive their requests for weapons favourably. This process essentially negated the re-emergent positivity between the two nations engendered during the war, leading to a Saudi consensus, which felt itself less than equal to its American ally. Thus, Saudi Arabia has found itself in a decidedly unenviable position that is, becoming dependent for its regional security on a country whose position with regard to Israel is fundamentally opposed to their own. Indeed, by virtue of necessary economic and military cooperation with the States, Saudi Arabia has found its three-pronged programme of foreign policy split ‘two-from-one’ against its regional priorities. In other words, by striving towards the goal of regional security, Saudi Arabia now exists in a form of indirect compliance with a territory it opposes necessarily in terms of its religious policy towards Israel.

This was again in evidence after the events of September 11th. More than any other recent event, the single act of terrorism which occurred on that infamous day has served to engender a potent, though unwarranted fear of the Islamic peoples in the minds of the Western World. The tendency towards ‘Islamophobia’ which arose as a by-

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product of ‘post 9/11’ culture cannot avoid taking on something of a political dimension. The Saudi nation has suffered acutely as a result. Indeed, while it is certainly hard for us to ignore this infamous date, it is more so for Saudi Arabia. This is simply because 15 of the 19 hijackers involved were Saudis, as was Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. The presence of such internal factions presents a lingering threat to policy unity, since unlike Al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists; Saudi Arabia does not endorse the idea of a single Islamic state, as noted above.

As a result of Saudi Arabia’s implication in the events of 9/11, the U.S. put pressure on Saudi Arabia to adopt counter-terrorism actions. In addition, it pressurised the Saudis to support America in its attempts to overthrow Saddam Hussein during the Second Gulf War. Thus, Saudi Arabia was placed in another position of difficult mediation. Whilst it recognised a growing anti-American sentiment amongst segments of its own population, it had to maintain positive relations with the States so as to solidify its international position. In addition to this, the Gulf conflict also represented a re-emergence of the threat of Iraqi dominance within the Arab world. Thus Saudi involvement in the war also became a matter of Arabian security. Furthermore, U.S. collusion also caused something of a P.R. dilemma for the Saudis, based on Islamic interests. In the current religious climate, many Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, play host to organisations which view Western Christianity as a tyranny. Thus the Saudi government is forced to distance itself still further from an anti-Israeli stance through compliance with America’s Christian, pro-Israeli world outlook. Furthermore, it is also forced to negotiate between a position of tolerance and extremism with regard to its safeguarding of Islamic interests. This leads into the following section which will take a wider look to Saudi in the region, with a more specific focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

**Saudi Role in the Region**

The Saudi Regional Security theme operates the maintenance of stability in the broader Middle East, as well as a natural prioritising of Saudi interests. Its goal is to neutralise anti-Arab aggression and external subversion of the Arab way of life. As such, it favours a general suspicion of non-Arab states, of which Israel is the most prominent. Occupation of Israel by non-Arabs constitutes external subversion, and is therefore a matter of regional security. In addition, regional security involves relations with Iraq, Iran, the Gulf Co-operation Council, Yemen, Jordan and most significantly the U.S.

**Relations with Iran**

Saudi Arabia’s role in the wider region cannot be discussed without acknowledging the primary role of Iran. Competition between these two regional powers is historical, religious, and political. Both countries perceive

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themselves as ‘the vanguard of the Muslim world’ and rank top in terms of proven oil reserves (although Saudi takes the top spot by a small amount).\textsuperscript{268} Although dominated by two separate sects of Islam—Saudi with a Sunni majority; Iran with a Shi’a majority—relations up until the 1970s remained relatively stable if not altogether positive. The 1979 Iranian revolution was a tipping point as the Shi’a clerics took power, essentially changing the balance of power in the region. The 1990s saw an improvement in Saudi-Iran relations particularly following the death of Khomeini and the ascent to power of President’s Rafsanjani and Khatami (moderates).\textsuperscript{269} However, the 2005 election of President Ahmadinejad signalled a return to a more traditional radicalism reminiscent of the early days of the revolution, exacerbating tensions again.\textsuperscript{270} This also coincided with the ascension to power of King Abdullah and a more ‘activist foreign policy that put Riyadh at odds with Tehran.’\textsuperscript{271}

The events of the past two years, that is, unrest and transition across the Middle East and North Africa, have also raised tensions between these two countries. This at least in part is related to Tehran’s nuclear ambitions, which have also contributed to strains within the Saudi-US relationship. American officials view the Saudis as the critical actor within the regime in terms of nuclear proliferation, acknowledging the fact that the Kingdom would have to consider production should the Iranian’s gain a full capability.\textsuperscript{272} According to one source ‘the Saudi’s competition with Iran also shapes their view of the changes taking place throughout the Middle East’ in the context outlined above which is that Iran is their biggest geo-political challenge in the region.\textsuperscript{273} This then relates to the Saudi position on support for the opposition in Syria, as the fall of the al-Assad regime would surely hurt Iran’s interests in the region as a knock-on effect (although this has had to be balanced against the Ulama’s support for varying groups who may present a more extremist threat to the Kingdom as outlined above).

In October 2011, tensions have increased as U.S. officials alleged there was a plot that involves the Iranian government to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington. Two Iranian-American have pleaded guilty to participate in the plot to kill the Saudi ambassador and bomb both the Saudi and Israeli embassies.\textsuperscript{274} According to Michael Rubin this could not have come as a surprise given the centuries old animosity between the two powers centred on the Persian Gulf divide; the Shi’-Sunni sectarian split; and the Persian-Arab rift.\textsuperscript{275} As American officials pointed the finger to the elite Iranian Qud’s Force in this latest incident; similarities can be drawn to the 1980s in which Saudi stability was undermined by the insurrection during the Hajj. It had not gone unnoticed within Tehran that Saudi had financed Iraq through its eight-year conflict with Iran.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{269}Ibid.
\bibitem{270}Ibid.
\bibitem{271}Ibid.
\bibitem{273}Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Furthermore, Saudi Arabia’s reaction to the Arab Spring has been to shore up Arab regimes elsewhere including Bahrain, which despite its majority Shi’a population, is ruled by a Sunni monarchy. This even resulted in the deployment of Saudi troops into Bahrain -in (14-Mar-2011) in order to quash popular protest, highlighting an important aspect of Saudi’s role in the region. This is balanced between the critical influences of the Ulama at home, with a desire to retain a degree of regional hegemony through backing other Arab regimes against external threats with the potential to spill over. Despite reports that claim the Syria crisis has helped warm the Saudi-Iran relationship - for example, King Abdullah invited President Ahmadinejad to a two-day summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and seated him at his side - the reality is much more complex. This instead represents the King’s cautious and pragmatic approach to the rapidly changing dynamics of the region—also highlighted by his reining in of the clerics’ funding of Syrian opposition groups noted previously.

The rhetoric both countries aimed at each other during the assassination plot crisis (the plot to kill the Saudi ambassador and bomb both the Saudi and Israeli embassies, as mentioned earlier), is in fact more representative of the facts on the ground. Whilst the Saudi Embassy in Washington stated that the plot was a ‘despicable violation of international norms, standards and conventions,’ the Iranian Foreign Ministry hit back with claims of an American-Saudi conspiracy. During this period, a conference run by the Middle East Society Council in Washington DC further concluded that Iran is in fact playing a careful role in the region amidst unrest, highlighting the contradictions in the ambitions of both countries. Meanwhile, Jahner suggests that the past two years of Arab transitions has led to a fundamental shift in power structures of the region, presenting opportunities ‘for more consolidated leadership in the Gulf for both Saudi Arabia and Iran.’ Underpinning both countries roles within the region is essentially the perpetuation of their own regimes, particularly via alliances within the Gulf.

The issue of regime survival is thus an important factor in how Saudi Arabia carries out its foreign policy in the region and on a much wider scale; determining its relations with not only the Gulf countries, but also the United States, and Iran. How the United States shapes its future policy towards Iran will also thus be an influence within this bilateral relationship, as Saudi seeks to maintain its critical relationship with the United States, whilst moving to counter any threat from Tehran. This relates also to the role Iran has had domestically on Saudi Arabia, highlighted by a number of examples. One is Iran’s foreign policy impact on the Hajj, which has often been

280 Ibid.
indicative of the wider relationship within a particular time period (i.e. more moderate or heightened tensions, etc.).\textsuperscript{282}

Secondly, as the case with Saudi Arabia’s own clerics, Iran’s clerics have also weighed in on foreign policy decision-making, most recently claiming that Saudi Arabia is a ‘centre of sedition’ in which terrorists can find refuge and plan crimes to be committed in other Arab states.\textsuperscript{283} This report emphasises the acknowledgment within Tehran of Saudi Arabia’s use of both Arab nationalism and the Ulama in securing its regional role. On the one hand, the statement aims to create tension between Saudi and other Arab states by suggesting there is a threat from the Kingdom. On the other hand, it also seeks to emphasis Western concerns surrounding the role of Saudi’s more radical clerics. These factors underpin not just Iranian opinions but the factors, which drive Saudi Arabia’s, own foreign policy.

**Middle East Peace Process**

The US-Israeli relations encompass military assistance and intelligence sharing, joint weapons research and purchases of Israeli equipment by the United States’ armed forces.\textsuperscript{284} Such military assistance poses a threat (while this is a matter of dispute considered by Arab states as a threat) Middle East and most importantly increases Israel’s spread not only on Palestinian territories, but Israeli forces have continued in the past to extend their hegemony reaching parts of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt which evokes Saudi Arabia’s concerns of Arab nationalism as well as regional security. It is important to note that military interactions do exist between Saudi Arabia and the United States, which also being perceived as a threat to Israeli security and created tensions between US-Israeli relations.\textsuperscript{285} But in comparison to Israeli’s ability to attack neighbouring Arab borders, Saudi Arabia cannot launch any military attack against Israel as long as it is dependent on its relations with the U.S.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is an important issue for Saudi foreign policy since, as mentioned earlier, the goal of regional security in the policy is to neutralise anti-Arab aggression and external subversion of the Arab way of life. To differing extents, all Arab states adopt a stance of non-recognition with regard to the State of Israel; they see the land comprising Israeli territory as belonging to the Arabs by right, and as having been designated Israeli at the expense of Palestinian disenfranchisement.\textsuperscript{286} Also, the Arab-Israeli conflict is based on a religious dispute, most significantly between Muslims and Jews that also makes the Arab-Israeli conflict important to the Saudi


foreign policy as an Islamic state. It advocates Palestinians claiming back their stolen lands with Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state since it embraces Al-Aqsa mosque, which is the third holiest mosque in Islam.

This was manifest in the 1939 British White paper, which restricted Jewish immigration to 75,000 over the next five years. Effectively, the anti-Semitic tendencies prevailing in Europe were being exported to the Middle East.\(^{287}\)

On November 29th, 1947, the new United Nations approved their own partition plan (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181) dividing the country into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. Jerusalem was to be designated as *corpus separatum*, an international city, under the jurisdiction of the U.N. so as to avoid the thorny issue of its status. Civil war ensued. Initially, the Jews found themselves on the defensive. Gradually, however, they gained advantage. The Palestinian-Arab economy collapsed and 250,000 Palestinian-Arabs fled or were expelled.\(^{288}\) On the 14\(^{th}\) of May 1948, the state of Israel declared its independence, one day before the end of the British Mandate.\(^{289}\)

Saudi Arabia has always been a staunch supporter of an Arab-dominated Palestine, and has seldom attempted to engage in any positive relations with Israel directly. True to a policy of Arab Nationalism, Saudi Arabia believes that failure to appease the Palestinians is the main cause of turmoil in the Middle East. The Saudi stance on the matter calls for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip, Jordanian, Egyptian territories and Golan Heights Syria, where most inhabitants are Palestinian. It also calls for a full-scale dismantling of Israeli territories in this region. The Saudis favour the creation of a separate Palestinian state, incorporating the West Bank and Gaza, and call for the compensation of Palestinians dispossessed by Israel.

Several sources have revealed some secret meetings held between Saudi and Israeli official members. Such sources include Saudi reformists led by the most famous figure, Saad Al Faqih who owns a channel and an internet website from which he expresses his opposing views and criticism of the Saudi Monarchy, as well as Television channels such as Al Jazeera channel, *Al Jadeed* channel (New Channel) and several other conferences held by political experts and strategists such as the recent conference titled ‘The allies: Saudi-Israeli relations and its threat to the Arab National Security,’ which was held in Cairo, March 16, 2009.\(^{290}\)

Members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad Palestinian movements have participated in the discussion and asserted that Saudi Arabia indeed shares secretive economic and military relations with Israel which go back from the establishment of Israel in 1948, and developed during Ehud Olmert’s administrations, despite the brutal Israeli


\(^{288}\) Ibid.

\(^{289}\) Ibid.

attack on Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2009. Similarly, a political documentary discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict broadcast on the Lebanese *Al Jadeed* Channel ‘New Channel’, pointed out the same claims accusing Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon of having secret relations with Israel. The Kingdom was suffering from internal financial and security problems, which led King Abdulaziz to seek support from the U.S. president whom agreed from his side, to assist the King on one condition. This was that Saudi Arabia shall not involve in any military action against Israel.

Similarly, after the 9/11 attacks, Saudi diplomats arranged a trip for American Jewish members of the congress to visit Saudi Arabia striving to stop the Jewish lobby’s accusations of Saudi Arabia being involved in the attacks. Moreover, another source mentioned that in September 2006, a meeting was held between the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the former Saudi Ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar Bin Sultan. The meeting was held in Jordan during the Bush administration and was an attempt to support Olmert after the Israeli war with Hezbollah. In March 2007, another significant report was written by Seymour Hersh, with the title, ‘Redirection’. That transformation in the policy has lead Saudi Arabia and Israel to achieve ‘A New Strategic Embrace’, especially in that both states share a common strand towards Iran as an existing threat, which brought them together with direct discussions. The Saudi government refuted those accusations of Saudi Arabia having economic relations with Israel, which was published by *Alriyadh* newspaper in 28th of September 2006.

What is commonly known through history is that overall, Saudi Arabia has no direct relations with Israel, but has been involved in attempts to develop a peace process towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. This goes back to the 1981 Peace Plan which comprised eight points, and was the first time in its history that Saudi Arabia had acknowledged Israel’s right to exist. It called for Israeli withdrawal from all Arab occupied territories, including Arab East Jerusalem. It also called for a right of return for all Palestinian refugees, with compensation for those who did not wish to return. Furthermore, it requested the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. However, alongside these stipulations, which seem too weighted against Israel, were some, which gave more favour to a real harmony. In this respect the plan called for a ‘guarantee of freedom of worship for all religions in the Holy Places’, as well as the affirmation that ‘all States in the region should be able to live in peace

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291 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
297 Ibid.
in the region. \(^{299}\)

In 2002, Saudi Arabia proposed another peace plan known as the ‘Beirut Declaration’\(^{300}\). Once again, the plan offered Israel normalised relations with Arab states in exchange for a full withdrawal from those territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It also asked for Israeli recognition of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. At the time, the programme received acclaim for its even-handedness. However, it was greeted with disdain from the Israelis. Violence in Israel and the occupied territories increased in the spring of 2002. This in turn led to an intensification of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a disturbance which had arisen as a result of Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which many saw as a deliberate gesture of incitement towards the Palestinians.\(^{301}\) This relationship is critical to Saudi Arabia’s role in the region and underpins the rest of this thesis.

**Summary**

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this chapter that also lead into the following chapters. Chapter Three will look in more detail at the Saudi-US relationship and how this impacts upon foreign policy particularly in regard to Israel. The chapter will then look to the role of Saudi Arabia’s neighbours in the region and their impact upon Saudi foreign policy through a Subaltern realist lens. This has already been touched on to a certain extent in this chapter, particularly through the section on Iran; however, this has set the context of what is one of the most important interactions in the region in terms of historical development and the current scenario. Chapter Three will develop this into a more nuanced look specifically on the Israel-Palestine issue. Similarly, relations with Egypt and other neighbouring countries will also be assessed.

Chapter four will then look in more detail at the domestic influences on its policy towards Israel and Palestine, again many of which have been touched upon in this chapter. Characteristics such as religion, the region, economics, and politics will all be discussed in greater detail, for example looking to why some Saudis have chosen to take the path to terrorist groups and what internal political disputes this has created. This chapter will reflect the results of correspondents distributed to members of a number of Saudi factions. Chapter Five will look specifically at Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli conflict and will be followed by a concluding chapter that will draw together a number of key arguments from the overall text and provide some recommendations for future Saudi foreign policy decision-makers.

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This chapter has outlined the views within critical pieces of literature on several aspects of Saudi foreign policy particularly in relation to Subaltern Realism as a theoretical framework. The major assumption is that as a developing state, Saudi Arabia is economically and militarily dependent on external sources (the US—as will be discussed in the following chapter). The Kingdom’s major relationships are with the United States (its external benefactor) and the Gulf monarchies which share similar characteristics such as religion, economic strategies, outward looking foreign policies, and political system. On the other hand, Iran sits as its major rival in the region resulting from theological differences (Sunni v. Shi’a) as well as contrasting systems of government.

Based on such evidence we may note that despite continued rebuttals of their proposals, Saudi Arabia has adopted a foreign policy of mediation between polar positions in the current climate. It’s an internal and external position, relying on a solid union of government opinion as much as a system of negotiations with other Arab states, and the rest of the world. Indeed, through the development of its foreign policy, Saudi Arabia has accrued the unique potential to make lasting progress towards peace between Arab and Israeli factions. As a state, it has essentially been corralled into a position whereby in order to assure its own security, it must cooperate with both sides to an equal degree of diligence. Since its interests lie with both anti and pro-Israeli factions, then its goal is to reach a compromise, which satisfies both ties to the maximum degree.

This could in turn provide a useful model on which to build tolerance and compromise from other Arab states. However, dissent from both factions with regard to Saudi proposals has shown that compromise may not be easily reached. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia must also deal with those extremist factions within its own boundaries not prepared to compromise. In short, Saudi Arabia’s diplomatic potential will be hard won, if at all. But to what extent can this attempted mediation succeed with the unstable political circumstances causing a constant change of the Saudi foreign policy. And how is Israel responding to such changes and instability, and how are their responses and stances affecting the Saudi foreign policy? These questions are important to answer through analysing the Arab-Israeli conflict more thoroughly in Chapter Five.

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CHAPTER THREE

Bringing in the International

Overview

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the importance of international factors in the development of the Saudi foreign policy. Before the analysis, it is crucial to first provide a brief overview of the chapter, its main focus and the understanding of the term international. The use of the Subaltern Realism perspective in underpinning this study has meant that it is vital to examine both the external and domestic factors that exist and impact upon Saudi Arabian foreign policy. The given weighting by Ayoob for both factors (Internal and External) means that the situation needs to be discussed and thoroughly analysed. In this manner, the chapter focuses on the external factors by identifying those countries that have the greatest influence on Saudi Arabia in the international arena. The term international refers specifically to the United States and the Middle Eastern neighbours of Saudi Arabia such as Iran. The researcher took the decision to focus on these countries specifically because of their influence and power within the region and, in the case of the United States, the growth of its relationship and influence over the past three decades.

This relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, which has included military and economic support, has given the US a strategic foothold in the region and allowed them to help influence policy within the league of Arab nations. Saudi Arabia, wary of the threat to their national interests and the strength provided by diplomatic ties to the US, has gained from this relationship but this has added to the complexity of Saudi Arabian foreign policy and arguably influenced its development as much, if not more, than the domestic issues involved. Therefore, this chapter presents an analysis of the international factors that influence Saudi Arabian foreign policy. The chapter focuses on a discussion of the US-Saudi relationship for the most part. This has been a conscious decision given the importance of this relationship attributed by academic scholars of Middle Eastern politics. First, the chapter discusses the US-Saudi Arabia relationship and its development since 1945, before assessing how the US political structure impacts on its relationships with both Israel and Saudi Arabia. As well as this, the chapter analyses the direct US role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and how the relationship with Saudi Arabia has developed since the beginning of the War on Terror era. This has complicated the relationship due to the links made between Saudi Arabian citizens (such as Osama bin Laden) to the terrorist networks and how this has developed the influence that the US has on Saudi Arabian foreign policy.

The international factors, however, do not just come from the West: Saudi foreign policy can equally be informed and influenced by its Middle Eastern neighbours. The final part of this chapter will consider the impact of these
international parties, the influence of the Arab countries and finally the impact of Iran. The government in Tehran is an important factor as it is one of the most dominant in the region and represents the strong anti-Western sentiments in the region. Therefore, this chapter also considers how this influences on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. In essence, the discussion of international chapters focuses on the factors in Saudi Arabian foreign policy decision-making that compete including the need to remain influential and powerful in the region (helped by the US relationship) and the desire not to aggravate regional relationships due to the strong sensation that exists in the area concerning Israel. This chapter develops these points and highlights the increasing difficulties that Saudi Arabia faces in progressing its foreign policy to meet the demands placed on it by these external factors.

Western Influences

Firstly, this chapter will focus on the important influence of Western countries, particularly the United States, on Saudi foreign policy. There will be a particular focus on the relationship of Saudi foreign policy and the Arab-Israeli conflict, but this is not the only area with which we are concerned. This part of the chapter will discuss the history of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States by examining how this relationship has informed Saudi foreign policy. It will also discuss the structural factors in the United States political system, which has an important bearing on Saudi foreign policy.

In addition, it will look at the role Saudi Arabia has played in the on-going, largely U.S.-led Palestinian peace process, particularly the Camp David Accords, the Oslo Accords, and the 2000 Camp David summit. Considering the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York as the start of a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy, which required a significant reaction from U.S. allies and partners (including Saudi Arabia), this shift in US policy informed a shift in Saudi foreign policy as well. The first part of this chapter will also examine how the United States’ relationship with and therefore influence on Saudi Arabia has changed since the commencement of the so-called ‘War on Terror’ – particularly in light of the fact that a number of Saudi citizens were implicated in planning, financing, and carrying out the 9/11 attacks, as well as allegedly supporting some of the states and non-state terrorist networks which the U.S. is now fighting around the globe.

US-Saudi relations post 1945

From the time when the Prophet Muhammad left Mecca to the modern era, the territory that now comprises Saudi Arabia was on the periphery of world affairs, of interest only for its important religious sites. The crucial turning point for Saudi Arabia’s foreign affairs and indeed its existence as a nation came in 1938, when huge reserves of oil were discovered in the Al-Hasa region. Oil transformed what had been one of the poorest countries in the world into an important world power of great interest to both Western countries (who relied on petroleum

imports to fuel their advanced economies) and poor Muslim allies who looked to the Saudis for financial support. This created a great deal of tension in Saudi Arabia’s foreign relations: while the country’s prosperity and security depends upon secular Western countries, particularly the United States, its religion and ideology are based around support for Arab nationalism and the Islamic faith. According to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia’s official foreign policy goals are focused on: cooperation with the Gulf States, the unity of the Arab world, solidarity with Muslim countries, and support for the United Nations.

From the very beginning of the modern Saudi state, the United States has been one of Saudi Arabia’s closest allies. Indeed, it was an American oil company; Standard Oil that was first granted exploration rights and first discovered oil in Al Hasa (Standard Oil’s subsidiary in Saudi Arabia later became Aramco, which was finally acquired by the Saudi government in 1980). Saudi oil reserves were considered to be of key strategic importance during the Second World War, allowing the country to become eligible for the lend-lease programme in 1943 despite the fact that lend-lease was supposed to be restricted to ‘democratic allies’ and Saudi Arabia was a kingdom, not a democracy. This incident is indicative of U.S. attitudes towards the Saudi kingdom in subsequent decades: when practical considerations (particularly to do with oil) come into conflict with idealistic rhetoric, practical considerations always win out. Such practical and strategic advantages of having a positive relationship with the United States were a natural guide to Saudi foreign policy. Indeed, such was the need for this positive relationship; even widespread ideological movements could not rival it in terms of informing Saudi foreign policy decisions. This can be illustrated through the idea of pan-Arab nationalism that began to emerge around 1945.

The idea of pan-Arab nationalism, which hoped to recapture the glory of past Muslim empires by slowly uniting all of the Arab states, and eventually perhaps all Muslim states, originated in the interwar years in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, but was revived after 1945 in Egypt and with the strong support of President Nasser. In theory, Arab nationalism could act as a bulwark against Communism; indeed, Syria decided to join the short-lived United Arab Republic with Egypt in 1957 when on the brink of a Communist takeover. However, Yaqub argues convincingly that the United States saw Pan-Arab nationalism as a threat to be ‘contained’, like Communism, under the

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Eisenhower Doctrine.\textsuperscript{311} This supports McMahon’s assessment in 1986 that the Eisenhower presidency was at best indifferent and at worst hostile to the emerging Third World nationalist movements of the 1950s, in a way which actually increased instability around the globe.\textsuperscript{312}

However, while Arab nationalism may have been only a peripheral concern for the Eisenhower administration, it was a crucial one for the Saudi royal family in the 1950s and 1960s. Pan-Arabism was, at its core, a secular and often socialist ideology, which did not sit well with the traditionalist Saudi royals.\textsuperscript{313} By forming OPEC to present a united front on oil price negotiations, Saudi Arabia definitely ‘[forsook] the Arab nationalist agenda of seizing Western oil assets and using them as a common resource for the development of the Arab world.\textsuperscript{314} The result was an uneasy mutual dependence between America and Saudi Arabia, which continues to this day, as informed by a need for a positive foreign policy towards the United States.

The Arab-Israeli conflict became a central point of contention in U.S.-Saudi affairs in the 1970s. Although Saudi Arabia had rejected much of the radical Pan-Arab programme, they remained linked by ties of ethnicity, culture, and religion to a ‘softer’ Pan-Arabism that included rhetorical, diplomatic, and financial support of Arab allies and Islamic causes throughout the region. This naturally included support for the Arab countries in their opposition to Israel. As Citino notes, this has created tension between Saudi Arabia, whose key ally (the United States) is also the main supporter of Israel, and her Arab neighbours. While Saudi Arabia was often criticised by other Arab countries for weak financial and military support of the struggle against Israel, they realised as early as the Suez crisis that oil itself could become a potent weapon. Under intense political pressure from both other Arab states and voices within his own government, King Saud decided to ban oil exports to Britain and France, despite the fact that this (along with the effects of the Suez Canal blockage) would reduce the government’s revenues by about one third.\textsuperscript{315} This is perhaps an example of a more indirect impact that the US had on Saudi foreign policy, since other factors were undoubtedly involved. However, pressures from ideological factions within Saudi Arabia were not compatible with the necessary positive relationship with the West. The desire to keep on positive terms with the United States necessitated a foreign policy that was at odds with Britain and France.

\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
In the 1967 war, King Faisal initially resisted using what would later be called the ‘Oil Weapon’ despite repeated pleas from Nasser, leaders in other Arab countries, and the local Ulama or Muslim leaders. However, the continued close Saudi relationship with the United States was putting a great deal of the pressure on the regime, both through external criticism from other Arab states and, perhaps more importantly, by stoking internal political dissent. During the 1967 war, the Saudi regime walked a fine line between aggressive rhetorical support of the Arab forces and practical resistance to any measures that would interfere with the flow of oil revenues and continued support from the United States. When Saudi Arabia did eventually join the embargo, U.S. diplomats made clear that they understood the pressures the Saudi regime was under and would not try to extract ‘punishment’ for their participation. On the Saudi side, the government was working to end the embargo as soon as possible, both to minimise their own significant economic pain and to maintain their long-term relationship with the United States. Even in the difficult context of war, and under the immense pressure that the Saudi regime was under from other parties to cut ties with the United States, the mutual requirement for a positive relationship dictated many of the decisions that were made. The foreign policy of Saudi was very much defined by the desire for a positive relationship with the United States.

Largely because of a lack of solidarity among oil-producing countries, the embargo had little serious effect on the availability of oil in United States or European countries. As a direct result, the oil-producing Arab nations formed the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1968 to help coordinate the use of oil as a method of gaining political leverage. The organisation sprang into action just five years later during the Yom Kippur War, declaring an embargo in October 16, 1973. The terms of the embargo included a 70 per cent increase in the price of oil per barrel and a continued series of five per cent cuts in production. The terms were extended to include a full embargo on shipments to the United States after President Nixon’s decision to appropriate $2.2 billion in emergency military aid to Israel on October 19. The ‘terms’ of a positive relationship between the United States and Saudi were in this way breached and so Saudi policy shifted, to great economic effect. This time, with the advent of political coordination through OAPEC, the economic impact on Western countries was devastating. While the ‘embargo’ element itself was largely symbolic – oil from Arab countries still reached the United States through intermediaries, as the market for oil is global – the price increases and production cuts caused the price of a barrel of oil to rise 400 per cent (from $3 to $12). Over the next seven years, the inflation-adjusted price of oil rose by 500 per cent, even though the embargo ended in 1974. Combined with the

instability caused by the breakdown of the Bretton Woods international monetary system in 1971, the oil shock led to high inflation and low growth in the United States throughout the 1970s.\footnote{L Aguier-Conraria & Y Wen. ‘Understanding the Large Negative Impact of Oil Shocks’, \textit{Journal of Money, Credit and Banking}, 39. (2007), pp. 925–944.}

While the ‘oil weapon’ had not secured victory for the Arab side, the Arab oil producing countries had finally realised the extent of their economic power. Saudi’s relationship with the United States and its evolution had a substantial part in this next informant of Saudi foreign policy. Importantly, the oil-producing countries had realised that they could use oil as a ‘weapon’ without damaging their own economies by increasing prices and lowering output, rather than completely cutting off exports: the result was huge flow of wealth from Western countries into the Arab oil producing states in the 1970s and 1980s. And because of the collapse of Bretton Woods, these oil exports were now paid for in U.S. dollars. By the middle 1970s, these huge stocks of ‘petrodollars’ quickly became a key feature of the world economy, and an important economic tool for Saudi Arabia, which had now found a way to convert its vast resource wealth into vast financial power as well. Karl describes the oil price spike of the 1970s as the ‘the most massive transfer of wealth ever to occur without war.’\footnote{T Karl. ‘The Perils of the Petro-state: Reflections on the Paradox of Plenty’, \textit{Journal of International Affairs}, 53. (1999).}

These huge inflows allowed the Saudi regime to reinforce its policy of sharing oil revenues with the population to forestall political reform, as well as providing significant opportunities for ‘chequebook diplomacy’ and altering the economic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. What had been a one-way relationship based on oil now became a reciprocal relationship based on both oil and financial wealth: the U.S. became an attractive investment destination for Saudi Arabia to ‘recycle’ its petrodollars\footnote{J Ruiz & J Vilarrubia. ‘International Recycling of Petrodollars’. Banco de España. (2006) \url{http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/429/} [accessed 12 July 2011].}, while the United States made large weapons sales to the Saudis (even right after the end of the embargo) in an attempt to ‘repatriate’ some of those petrodollars.\footnote{E Nakhleh. ‘United States and Saudi Arabia: A Policy Analysis.’ \textit{Foreign Affairs Studies}. (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975).} Kaiser and Ottoway write that ‘On the foundation of that wealth and the oil that produced it, the modern Saudi-American relationship was constructed.’\footnote{R Kaiser & D Ottaway. ‘Oil for Security Fueled Close Ties But Major Differences Led to Tensions’, \textit{The Washington Post}. (2002), p. A01.} Once again, Saudi foreign policy must be directed with the goal of a positive relationship with the United States. Indeed, this aim was mutual despite the immense damage caused to the U.S. economy by the 1973 oil embargo. The concerted attempt by Saudi Arabia to help achieve the military defeat of Washington’s close ally, Israel, the Americans immediately set about reconstructing the U.S.-Saudi relationship as soon as the embargo was lifted. In August 1974, just 5 months after the official end of the boycott, U.S. Treasury Secretary William E. Simon visited the kingdom to help rebuild political and economic ties – the goal, he wrote, was ‘establishing the closest possible partnership with the Saudis,’ one which would ensure the U.S. access to Saudi oil at reasonable prices, and that the Saudi regime used its financial and
political clout ‘moderately’ and responsibility.\textsuperscript{327}

The outcome of Simon’s visit was the creation of a remarkable institution called the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation. The Commission provided many of the kinds of technical and development assistance that the United States offered to its other Cold War allies through foreign aid programmes – but, uniquely, these programmes were financed entirely by the Saudis themselves.\textsuperscript{328} The result was the creation of a modern state whose institutions and infrastructure broadly resembled their U.S. counterparts, but whose politics were entirely alien to Saudi Arabia’s American allies.\textsuperscript{329} At the same time, Saudi investors seeking a safe harbour for their petrodollars also became major investors in U.S. Treasury securities, helping to finance decades of U.S. budget deficits. More importantly, the agreement of the Saudis (and other Arab oil exporters) to denominate their oil exports in dollars in exchange for U.S. security guarantees, weapons, and military bases (also paid for in dollars), helped to prop up the value of the ‘paper’ dollar after the U.S. left the gold standard in 1971. This ‘oil for security’ paradigm was first seriously tested in 1991, when Iraq invaded its neighbour Kuwait; the U.S. and its international allies swiftly responded and defeated the Iraqis, with forces based in and partly financed by Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{330} This is a direct example of where Saudi foreign policy was influenced by its relationship with the United States.

The impact of the United States on Saudi foreign policy decisions is, therefore, significant. The best way of summarising the nature of influence is to assert that during period where it has been seen to be most economically and politically beneficial for Saudi to have a positive relationship with the United States, their policy decisions have been dictated by the pursuit of this aim, even to the detriment of internal relationships or relationships with other countries.

\textit{How US political structure affects relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia}

In attempting to understand how the relationship with the United States affects a smaller partner like Saudi Arabia (or Israel), it is tempting to view the U.S. as a superpower with essentially unlimited freedom of action in the military, economic, and diplomatic spheres.\textsuperscript{331} The reality, of course, is that even with its unmatched military power and significant economic might, the United States is often highly constrained in its dealings even with much less powerful countries – particularly its strategic allies. This represents a state of affairs that Wilkinson calls ‘unipolarity without hegemony’ – that is, the United States is the only ‘Great Power’ in the world, yet it

\textsuperscript{327} Ibid.
cannot be said to completely dominate. A significant reason for this is that the United States is highly dependent on a number of smaller ‘pivotal’ states, both allies and non-allies, for its economic and military security (Saudi Arabia being one of these). This section will consider how factors embedded in the U.S. political and economic structure affect its International Relations, with a focus on Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the other Arab countries, therefore providing the identification of other international factors which affect Saudi foreign policy.

The United States generally presents itself as a ‘pure’ (untainted, inherently moral international actor motivated by a liberal idealist paradigm of democracy, human rights, and free markets. Indeed, many (though certainly not all) within U.S. foreign policy structures believe in this view; as Ruggie notes, ‘it is inappropriate to dismiss the invocation of these principles as ‘mere rhetoric’.’ However, it has long been recognised both by theorists and practitioners at the highest levels that the United States will always value its core national interests over its stated democratic and human rights principles. However, realist approaches alone cannot fully explain U.S. International Relations. Realism explains why the United States would cooperate with an oil-rich state like Saudi Arabia despite the latter being ruled by an absolute monarchy that does not conform to Western human rights norms; what is less clear is why the U.S. would so closely align itself with a small and (initially) powerless state like Israel, even when doing so complicates its relationships with other more strategically important countries in the region. To fully understand the U.S.-Israel relationship, it is necessary to examine certain features of the U.S. political system, which give Israeli interests an outsized level of influence with American administrations from both political parties.

The fact that Jewish interest groups in the United States have an outsized influence on American policy-makers is an oft-repeated trope employed by those who oppose Israel’s actions in the Palestinian Territories. It is also important to distance discussion of this factor from completely ungrounded anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Indeed, it should be pointed out that a very similar dynamic sustains the hard-line U.S. policy towards Cuba, which most other states in the United Nations have repudiated in some fashion. A relatively small group of anti-Castro Cuban exiles in South Florida, using a combination of lobbying, strategic campaign donations, and bloc voting (Florida is a large ‘swing state’ and so relatively few votes there can often decide the presidency, as happened in the 2000 election), have managed to keep a strict anti-Cuba policy in place for more than 60 years. So called ‘diaspora politics’ have always been important in the multicultural United States; as Shain noted in

1994, ‘the ability of U.S. diasporas to affect American foreign policy towards their homeland has grown (and is likely to expand) because of the greater complexity in distinguishing between America’s friends and foes after the collapse of communism,’ as well as due to the decline of traditional professional elites in the U.S. foreign policy establishment.\textsuperscript{337}

The centrepiece of the American Jewish community’s influence over U.S. foreign policy towards Israel is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the so-called Israel Lobby. AIPAC is often regarded as one of the most powerful lobbying organisations in Washington, despite the fact that Jews make up less than 2 per cent of the American population. But while it is commonly asserted in the media and by critics of Israel that America’s unconditional support for Israel is driven at least in part by the American Jewish community, the idea has been harder to qualify in the academic literature. Realist scholars Mearsheimer and Walt outlined the influence of the Israel Lobby on U.S. foreign policy in a series of highly controversial articles in 2006, arguing that ‘the primary thrust of U.S. policy in the [Middle East] region is due primarily to U.S. domestic politics and especially to the activities of the ‘Israel Lobby’’.\textsuperscript{338} While there are obvious reasons of ideology and national interest for why the U.S. might support Israel, such as it being the only democracy in the Middle East, the desirability of having a strong counter-balance to the Arab countries and concern about protecting Jewish people from further human rights abuses after the Holocaust, it seems counter-intuitive that this support would be so unconditional (and unquestioning of Israel’s own documented human rights abuses) if these were the only reasons.

Thus, the ‘Israel Lobby’ provides a useful piece of the puzzle for understanding U.S. motivations towards Israel. Again, it should be noted that this is not an argument that American Jews have any outsized influence, just that under the American political system a savvy combination of lobbying, bloc voting (there are also many Jewish retirees in Florida), and strategic campaign donations can significantly influence the policy views of elected officials. The American ‘Israel Lobby’ has undoubtedly used these tools to increase their influence.

Finally, it is interesting to note that there are often significant differences in opinion between the Jewish ‘diaspora’ and the population actually living in Israel, not all of whom are Jewish.\textsuperscript{339} The latter have long supported some kind of two-state solution with certain concessions to the Palestinians\textsuperscript{340}, and at various times a plurality has supported an even more generous peace settlement arrangement. There are also numerous Israeli groups that oppose certain actions of the Israeli government, decry Israeli human rights abuses, and assist Palestinian causes.

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while the American Jewish community is generally far more hawkish towards Palestinians.

As noted above, Saudi Arabia’s importance to the U.S. has historically been of an economic nature. The OPEC oil boycott of 1973, which was called in retaliation for the United States’ decision to resupply the Israeli army during the Yom Kippur war, showed just how dependent the U.S. economy had become on imported oil. As a result, maintaining cordial relations with key oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia became a U.S. priority. Since the turn of the millennium, however, the structure of U.S. interests with regard to Saudi Arabia and the broader Middle East have shifted somewhat. For one, oil suppliers outside of the traditional OPEC framework, like Russia and Venezuela, have gained prominence. While in 2010 the U.S. still depended on imports for 66 per cent of its oil consumption, more than half of U.S. oil imports now come from countries outside the Middle East and OPEC, compared to just 26 per cent in 1980. While Saudi Arabia still holds the world’s largest oil reserves and so is of undeniable strategic economic importance to the United States, its relative value in this area has declined somewhat. Indeed, in 1980, Saudi Arabia was the largest supplier of imported oil to the United States, representing 23.7 per cent of imports; by 2009, that had fallen to 10.9 per cent, less even in absolute terms than in 1980. At the same time, the September 11, 2001 attacks shifted the strategic focus of U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia towards a greater focus on anti-terrorism issues, particularly as Saudi citizens were involved in planning and carrying out the attacks. While these shifts can be readily explained by traditional realist paradigms of national interest, the domestic political dimension should also not be overlooked. Since the 1970s, the issue of ‘dependence on foreign oil’ has been growing in importance on the domestic political scene, and has featured in most presidential campaigns since 1973.

Despite the failure of successive U.S. administrations to do much about overall oil imports, U.S. policy (in concert with the efforts of major oil companies to find new sources of supply, and many events outside of policy makers’ control) has been somewhat successful in at least spreading imports among a greater number of countries, many of them outside of OPEC. Still, Roger Ebel, chairman of the Energy Programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, an influential think tank, noted in his testimony to Congress in 2005 that U.S. energy security policy has traditionally rested on four pillars: ‘encouraging the development of a wide variety of energy supplies at home and abroad’; ‘(periodically) promoting improved efficiency, conversation, and the development of alternative energy sources’; establishing a strategic reserve and international sharing agreements; and, crucially, ‘relying on Saudi Arabia to act responsibly as the swing producer to moderate price and supply volatility.’

343 bid.
346 R Ebel.‘US Foreign Policy, Petroleum and the Middle East’, Middle East Economic Survey, 48, (2005), p. 44.
While the U.S. thus still depends on Saudi Arabia to reliably ramp up production when other supplies are threatened, increased output by new producers and those outside of OPEC can still be argued to have demonstrably weakened Saudi Arabia’s economic clout with the United States, allowing U.S. diplomats greater freedom to press the Saudi government on human rights and counter-terrorism issues.

Likewise, the shock and horror of the September 11 attacks led to an overwhelming public demand to ‘do something’.\(^{347}\) In addition to widespread public support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there was significant domestic pressure in the early 2000s to increase anti-terrorism activities worldwide – particularly as the close relationship between the Bush family and the House of Saud was brought to light by journalists and documentary filmmakers.\(^ {348}\) While there may have been little real substance to these insinuations, they did place pressure on Bush to publicly distance himself personally from the Saudi regime, implying a greater pressure for cooperation on anti-terrorism issues and on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. These recent shifts in U.S.-Saudi relations will be more fully discussed below, but in summary the impact of international factors (in this case the impact of the structures of the United States) on Saudi foreign policy is that as the agenda of the United States alters, their policy towards Saudi alters as well, provoking in turn a response of some kind from the Saudis. This will be further explored with a study of post-9/11 relations.

**U.S role in the Arab-Israeli conflict**

As noted above, the main goal of U.S. policy in the Middle East during the Cold War was stability and Communist containment. However, particularly after the Yom Kippur War and the disastrous oil embargo, Western countries began to take more seriously the task of achieving a lasting resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. While this initially appeared to be a process of international diplomacy involving the Arab states, by the late 1980s the issue had become much more complicated thanks to the emergence of powerful non-state actors within the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, and throughout the Middle East. This section will now briefly review the progress of the peace process, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia’s role in each of the key stages.

The 1967 war had been an embarrassment for the Arab countries, with half of the Egyptian Air Force and two-thirds of the Syrian Air Force destroyed on the ground, and large amounts of territory lost to Israel. By the end of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Israelis had once again successfully repulsed an Arab attack and comprehensively defeated the military forces of Egypt and Syria. Seeing even their carefully prepared and coordinated attack foiled, many in the Arab countries determined after 1973 that Israel could not be defeated militarily. Meanwhile, on the

\(^{347}\) J Mueller. ‘Reactions and Overreactions to Terrorism’, in *Terrorism in History: The Strategic Impact of Terrorism from Sarajevo 1914 to 9/11* (presented at the 25th Anniversary Conflict Studies Conference, Centre for Conflict Studies, University of New Brunswick. 2005).

Israeli side, the military and the general population had been shocked by the early reverses for the Israeli side, and realised that they were more vulnerable than they had thought after the unqualified success in the Six Day War\textsuperscript{349}. The cease-fire negotiations in 1973 were the first time that Arab and Israeli leaders had met in person since 1948; from these negotiations emerged a gradual rapprochement that would see the end of direct, state-led military attacks on Israel.

Both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had important roles to play in this process. The U.S., by virtue of their strategic influence, took a much more direct role. As Kurtzer \textit{et al}. note, during the long peace negotiations after 1973 ‘Washington often stepped in and provided political assurances, economic assistance, or security guarantees, in effect offering the parties what they could not obtain directly from each other.’\textsuperscript{350} The ultimate result was the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, leading to the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979, the first such treaty between Israel and an Arab state. An important condition of the agreement was the provision of several billion dollars in annual U.S. military and humanitarian aid to both Egypt and Israel\textsuperscript{351}.

Despite the close relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the Saudis were not directly involved in the negotiations leading up to the Camp David accords. Indeed, Saudi acquiescence to the deal required the authorisation of sales of advanced fighter aircraft to the kingdom, which created additional tensions with Israel and the American Jewish community opposing the sales.\textsuperscript{352} However, despite the limited Saudi involvement in the process, Camp David fundamentally shifted Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy options towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Kelman notes, Egypt’s signing of peace treaty and official recognition of Israel represented the crossing of an important ‘psychological frontier.’\textsuperscript{353} After Camp David, it became much more difficult for any Arab state, particularly one that was a close U.S. ally, to openly question Israel’s legitimacy. Nevertheless, the Camp David Accords caused a major rift between Egypt and Saudi Arabia; the Saudis considered Camp David a ‘betrayal’ and, along with other Arab states, broke diplomatic relations with Egypt until 1987. In an article in the \textit{Washington Post} in 1979, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat publicly accused the Saudis of prompting the other Arab nations to sever their relations with Egypt.\textsuperscript{354}

Under Reagan, U.S. policy in the Middle East tended to focus more on the Soviet threat, coinciding with the stronger Cold War tensions at that time. Thus, efforts to resolve the Palestinian issue took a back seat to concern

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid, p. 39.
about Soviet influence and Gulf oil supplies.\textsuperscript{355} At the same time, the importance of the Palestinian aspect of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict was growing. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, founded in 1964 at the first Arab League summit, gained political power throughout the 1970s, while still being regarded as a terrorist organisation by the United States and other Western powers, and enjoying uneasy relationships with the Arab powers.\textsuperscript{356} The PLO leadership was, however, closely linked to the Saudi Royal Family in the 1980s, with Yasir Arafat being a close personal friend of many leading Saudi royals and a frequent visitor to the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{357} Mattar notes that before the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia was the largest financial supporter of the PLO, contributing $72 million per year, in addition to large grants to the Occupied Territories and remittances from Palestinians working in the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{358} While the U.S. and Israel continued to officially regard the PLO as a terrorist organisation until the Madrid Conference of 1991, the Saudis from the beginning recognised the PLO as the official representatives of the Palestinian people (as did most of the rest of the world once the PLO was granted UN observer status in the 1970s).\textsuperscript{359}

Stemming directly from the Madrid conference, the Oslo Accords, signed in 1993, were a breakthrough in terms of the relationships between the United States, Israel, and the Palestinians, with Israel (and the United States) recognising the legitimacy of the PLO, while setting all parties on a path to settle the remaining ‘permanent issues’ by 1995\textsuperscript{360} – an ambitious target in retrospect. For Saudi Arabia, this would seem to be a crucial development, as a resolution to the long-running conflict between Israel and Palestine would eliminate one of the key sources of tension between Saudi Arabia and its most important international military ally and export customer, the United States. However, despite the apparent advantages to the Saudis of putting their substantial weight behind finding a solution to the crisis, a variety of internal factors, which will be described below, prevented the monarchy from taking a coherent position on the peace process, despite the close links between Saudi Arabia and both the PLO (now the official representatives of the Palestinian state) and the United States (Israel’s main backer). While Saudi Arabia officially supported the US-led Palestinian peace process, unlike other Arab states it made no moves to open lines of direct communication or trade with Israel – though it did stop enforcing a ‘tertiary’ or indirect boycott in 1994.\textsuperscript{361}

At the same time, Saudi support for more radical elements in the Palestinian Territories, particularly Hamas, led to increased tension with the United States and Israel. Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the more radical organisations has always been fraught, as the Saudis were seen by some of these groups as having overly close ties with the West which made them suspect at best, and tools of Western imperialism at worst. Islamic Jihad, for example, considered both Israel and the Arab regimes to be ‘two faces of the same coin; they are both the fruit of the Western invasion of the Arab world’ and suggested that Saudi Arabia and other Arab regimes with Western ties simply provided a ‘security belt’ for Israel.\footnote{Z Abu-Amr. ‘Hamas: A Historical and Political Background’, \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, 22. (1993), pp. 5–19.} However, Hamas enjoyed a close relationship with (and possibly official financial support from) Saudi Arabia, at least before the Gulf War, during which Hamas took a position similar to the PLO and alienated many of its Arab allies.\footnote{Ibid, p.16.}

With the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the momentum behind the peace process slowed considerably, with only small, incremental agreements being made throughout the late 1990s (particularly Netanyahu’s ‘tit for tat’ policy). However, the launching of the second Camp David accords in 2000 led to a renewed focus on cementing a lasting peace between the two sides. However, despite intense US pressure, the new summit resulted in an impasse; Israel did not fully meet the Palestinians’ demands, and Arafat rejected the final Israeli proposal without offering a counter-proposal.\footnote{A Celso. ‘The Death of the Oslo Accords: Israeli Security Options in the Post-Arafat Era’, \textit{Mediterranean Quarterly}, 14(1). (2003), pp.67-68.}

Consensus opinion, particularly in the United States and in Israel, blamed Arafat almost solely for the failure to reach an agreement, leading directly to the violence of the Second Intifada. However, critics soon emerged to challenge this narrative. For instance, Deborah Sontag, writing in the New York Times in 2001, argued that:

‘Mr. Barak did not offer Mr. Arafat the moon at Camp David. He broke Israeli taboos against any discussion of dividing Jerusalem, and he sketched out an offer that was politically courageous, especially for an Israeli leader with a faltering coalition. But it was a proposal that the Palestinians did not believe would leave them with a viable state.’\footnote{D Sontag. ‘Quest for Middle East Peace: How and Why It Failed’, \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, 31. (2001), pp. 75–85.}

In fact, some of the failure must be attributed not to malice on either side, but simply to unfortunate political realities. Agha and Malley write that Ehud Barak saw, in 2000, a unique opportunity to abandon the gradualism of Oslo and offer a single, sweeping, comprehensive agreement, calculating that the Israeli public would accept even previously unthinkable concessions (like a division of Jerusalem) if the agreement promised to bring peace and stability to their country:
‘Oslo was being turned on its head. It had been a wager on success – a blank check signed by two sides willing to take difficult preliminary steps in the expectation that they would reach an agreement […] In Barak’s mind, Arafat had to be made to understand that there was no “third way,” no “reversion to the interim approach,” but rather a corridor leading either to an agreement or to confrontation.’366

However, Barak failed to anticipate the psychological impact his ‘all or nothing’ approach, which he intended as much to force the compromise on his own citizens as on the Palestinians, would have on the Palestinians, who saw themselves being internationally isolated and forced into accepting a sub-par deal. As Agha and Malley put it, ‘the greater the pressure, the more stubborn the belief among Palestinians that Barak was trying to dupe them.’367

With the Camp David deal rejected and the Second Intifada erupting throughout the Palestinian Territories, relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia had reached perhaps their lowest point since the period leading up to the oil embargo in 1973 – and once again as a result of US attempts to intervene in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The next section will discuss the roots of this tension, particularly the rocky first few months of the G.W. Bush presidency, along with a brief discussion of how US-Saudi relations have been reshaped in the War on Terror era.

**US-Saudi relations in the war on Terror era**

After the collapse of Camp David and the outbreak of renewed political violence in the Palestinian Territories, US Saudi relations had reached the lowest point in decades. With the election of President Bush in 2000, there was hope on the Saudi side that this would lead to a renewal of the relationship, as Bush’s father (and many of the top officials in his administration) had close, if informal, ties to the Saudi leadership, and he had made explicit overtures to the Arab community during his Presidential campaign.368 However, the apparent advantages (from the Saudi perspective) merely led to ‘considerable misunderstanding and confusion when the new Bush showed little inclination to follow in his father’s footsteps in the Middle East.’369

The intifada also created major problems for the relationship between the two countries. In Saudi Arabia, a demographic surge combined with greater access to media thanks to the blossoming of Arab language satellite television and the introduction of the Internet to the Kingdom, led to significant tension as young Saudis were enraged by the abuses against Palestinians they saw on their television and computer screens. This fury also spilled over into the longstanding relationship between the Saudi leadership and the United States, which was perceived as explicitly supporting the Israeli atrocities. At the same time, Bush’s programme of personal diplomacy, shunning Yasser Arafat while repeatedly hosting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Washington,

367 Ibid, p. 4.
369 Ibid, p. 86.
only inflamed this tension. Dissatisfaction was felt at the top of the Saudi leadership; as Crown Prince Abdullah’s brother, Talal bin Abdel Aziz, told the *New York Times* in December of 2000, ‘Too biased a stand makes an awkward situation for America's friends.’\(^{370}\) Attempting to defuse the situation, Bush reportedly sent a letter to King Abdullah (who had refused invitations to Washington) reiterating his commitment to a Palestinian state, which was shared with Arab leaders, including Arafat, who passed back a message offering to fulfil Bush’s conditions for a return to peace talks.\(^{371}\)

However, it was the events of September 11, 2001, which truly reconfigured the US Saudi relationship – especially since 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals. This has created significant problems for both the Saudis and for President Bush, whose close relationship to the Saudi regime was seen as problematic, for different reasons, by both ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ elements of the American public.\(^{372}\) While Bin Laden was as much an enemy of the Saudi government as of America, and had his citizenship revoked in 1994, many of the foreign fighters picked up in Afghanistan and many of the suicide bombers attacking US forces in Iraq turned out to be Saudis as well. As one commenter put it, the US Saudi ‘special relationship’ ‘was buried in the ashes of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.’\(^{373}\)

The Saudi regime was thus once again forced into the position of walking a tightrope between providing official support to their American allies (and official condemnation of terrorism)\(^{374}\) while trying not to alienate their traditional Islamist allies or the significant proportion of the Saudi population who may have sympathised with certain elements of Al Qaeda’s programme – including that organisation’s opposition to the current Saudi regime. At the same time, US attention had turned to what was now being called the War on Terror, including the invasion of Afghanistan and the gearing up for a war in Iraq, leaving the Israel-Palestine issue on the back burner.

It was in this delicate political context that the Arab Peace Initiative emerged from the 2002 Beirut Summit. At this time, the peace process was in complete disarray, and ‘[t]he hope generated by the Oslo Accords and the political capital spent to preserve its ideological and political trajectory [had] been replaced by cynicism, suicide bombings, and despair.’\(^{375}\) Therefore, the emergence of this initiative was somewhat surprising, especially as the meeting was widely expected to be a failure (in part because key leaders such as Yasser Arafat, Hosni Mubarak,

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372 Ibid, p.87.


374 The Saudi government issued a statement on the day of the attacks calling them ‘regrettable and inhuman,’ and stopped recognising the Taliban as of November 2001.

and King Abdullah decided not to attend). The Initiative, which was proposed by Crown Prince Abdullah, was considered a major break from the past and a sign of serious determination on the part of the Arab countries to end the longstanding conflict, both because of the conditions surrounding its adoption (the violence of the Second Intifada and the war in Afghanistan) and its relatively charitable terms, especially compared to the hard line on Israel the Arab League had taken in the past. In a speech on the day the initiative was adopted, Crown Prince Abdullah summarised both its motivations and its content thusly:

‘We believe in taking up arms in self-defence and to deter aggression. But we also believe in peace when it is based on justice and equity, and when it brings an end to conflict. Only within the context of true peace can normal relations flourish between the people of the region and allow the region to pursue development rather than war. In light of the above, and with your backing and that of the Almighty, I propose that the Arab summit put forward a clear and unanimous initiative addressed to the United Nations security council based on two basic issues: normal relations and security for Israel in exchange for full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, recognition of an independent Palestinian state with al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, and the return of refugees.’

However, events on the ground soon overshadowed the new proposal. A series of deadly bombings rocked Israel while the Arab League delegates were meeting in Beirut, and the Israeli government responded with a fierce counter offensive against Palestinian factions’ bases within the West Bank, reducing Crown Prince Abdullah to ‘offering bitter denunciations of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’ before the summit had even ended. The result, instead of a new hope for peace in the Palestinian Territories, was in fact a major embarrassment for Saudi Arabia. By the time of Crown Prince Abdullah’s trip to Texas in April 2002, to smooth over relations, anonymous Saudi sources were already discussing a possible return to use of the ‘oil weapon.’

The lead up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 only increased tensions between the two countries. Not only did many countries, on the grounds of basic international law, oppose the invasion, it also presented a special regional security problem for Saudi Arabia, which had long viewed Iraq as a key source of Sunni power against the encroachments of Iran. By toppling Saddam and installing a Shiite government in that country, the United States had, in the view of the Saudi government, radically shifted the regional balance of power in favour of Iran. ‘Several years ago [in the 1980s], we fought a war with the United States and Saudi Arabia in order to save Iraq from the occupation of Iran. Now it seems that Iran is being handed over Iraq on a golden platter,’ as Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, put it at a speech at Rice University in 2005. ‘Unless the Sunnis and Shias are brought together in a majority government to hold the country together, it will disintegrate into civil war. And then, the whole region will also disintegrate and conflicts that we have not dreamt of in the past will be facing the

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international community.’\textsuperscript{380} Thus, for Saudi Arabia, opposition to the Iraq war was not so much a matter of principle (as for the European countries) or of appeasing popular resentment against the United States (as in many other Arab countries), but rather a concern for religious and regional security issues. But it can also be placed into a broader narrative of Saudi Arabia’s post-9/11 attempts to redefine their relationship with their longstanding Western ally.\textsuperscript{381} For example, although the Saudis no longer support the US military presence on their soil – the removal of which, incidentally, was one of Al Qaeda’s primary strategic objectives – the two countries continue to cooperate closely on counter-terrorism issues since an eruption of domestic attacks in Saudi Arabia in 2003, and the US remains Saudi Arabia’s main supplier of arms and military training. At the same time, private Saudi citizens are known to be major financiers of both militant Sunni groups in Iraq and more extreme global terrorist organisations, including Al Qaeda, creating significant tension between the two governments and, in some cases, between the Saudi government (which has also been victimised by terrorists) and its own citizens.\textsuperscript{382}

Despite rhetoric about a new approach to dealing with the Arab world, the new Obama administration has done little in terms of concrete actions to reverse the general direction of relations between the two countries, including in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Although Obama voiced support for the Arab Peace Initiative\textsuperscript{383}, which remains the only plan supported by Saudi Arabia and the other Arab nations, Israel has yet to formulate an official government response and progress remains stalled. Obama’s major speech reiterating US foreign policy towards the Arab countries after the recent unrest in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere did little to change perceptions of his policies either with the Saudi government or with reform elements within the country. As one reformer noted to Al Arabiya, the US had been discussing the need for reform of the monarchy since 2004, with little to show for it. ‘With all these nice words, will it be transformed into policy?’ said Mohammad F. al-Qahtani, a political activist. ‘That is a big if.’\textsuperscript{384} Perhaps the best summary of the current state of affairs, then, comes from Ottoway, who writes:

‘After viewing the United States as its primary source of security for decades, the Saudi royal family regards it today as a major cause of insecurity. The Saudi government is struggling to determine how close it wants, or can afford, to be. [...] It wants the U.S.-Saudi relationship to be normal, rather than special.’\textsuperscript{385}


Middle Eastern Neighbours

Washington has always been, and remains, Saudi Arabia’s closest and most important international ally, being the main source of their wealth and the means by which they defend that wealth. However, the Saudi monarchy and people also place great stock in their relationship with their Arab neighbours, particularly in their role as guardians of Islam and their regional leadership in the Middle East. Thus it can be said that the opinions of other Arab states may carry an outsized influence with the Saudi government, which transcends the fundamental security, and economic concerns that govern Saudi relations with the United States. These influences are examined in below.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia is facing a growing regional threat from Iran, which is playing an increasing role in Saudi foreign affairs, particularly due to the war in Iraq and the growing conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in that country. While Iran’s nuclear ambitions have become a major international focus point, Saudi Arabia’s unique relationship to this threat – and the linkages between these concerns and the on-going Israeli-Palestinian conflict – represent a perhaps overlooked focus point for understanding Saudi foreign policy, which is discussed in the first part of this chapter.

Influence of the Arab countries

Saudi Arabia has long viewed itself, in part by virtue of its possession of the Muslim holy sites of Mecca and Medina, as the defender of the Islamic faith. It has also long represented an alternative vision of Arab unity to the more secular pan-Arabic vision emanating from Egypt, which gained popularity in the ‘60s and ‘70s, a vision based more on an Islamic agenda and looser political association. Of course, Saudi Arabia’s close ties to the United States, as well as the monarchy’s lack of desire to financially support the poorer Arab countries with Saudi oil wealth, has led to tensions with Saudi Arabia’s Arab allies. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has always desired to be seen as a leader of the Arab world and Sunni Islam.

Traditionally, Cairo and Riyadh are viewed as the two poles forming a political axis across the regional system in the contemporary Arab world, as well as the broader Middle East, with both countries claiming a leadership role. While Egypt is the most populous Arab state, Saudi Arabia would seem to be a natural leader in the modern era, given that it is the location of Islam’s holiest sites and its immense wealth (Saudi Arabia’s GDP is almost twice as large as Egypt’s, despite having just one third of the population). This has in fact increasingly come to pass: Korany notes that despite attempts to achieve Egyptian hegemony in the 1960s and 70s, this had given way to the

388 Population and GDP figures from World Bank, PPP (Atlas method).
rise of the ‘petro powers’ which, by the end of the Gulf War, had reshaped the regional balance of power.\textsuperscript{389}

Korany further emphasises the importance of the ‘balance of power’ concept, which may have become outmoded in other contexts, in shaping outside thinking about the Middle East and the Arab world, particularly for US policy makers. Korany notes that defining and operationalizing the concept of ‘balance of power’ has historically been difficult since at least the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but that ‘we can agree that power among states is not uniquely military, and that it is always relative, never absolute. In fact, such an understanding of power is crucial in saving the balance of power concept and making it useful in discussing present structures and processes in the Middle East.’\textsuperscript{390}

The shift in power and leadership in the Arab world from Egypt and its close allies to the ‘petro states’ (including the largest, richest, and most influential, Saudi Arabia) was a slow one, complicated by the fact that Saudi Arabia was necessarily seeking a regional leadership role, while simultaneously trying to maintain its status as regional hegemon on the Arabian peninsula.\textsuperscript{391} This process was always a difficult balancing act for Saudi Arabia, which understandably faced difficulties in maintaining its status as a leader of the Arab world while being economically and militarily dependent on, and thus a close ally of, the United States.

Saudi Arabia’s role in the Arab world, especially vis-à-vis Egypt, has fluctuated with key global events in the region, particularly the unfolding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The 1967 and especially 1973 boycotts represented a difficult choice for the Saudi leadership, who wished to maintain their good relationship with the United States but were in many respects pressured into taking action by their both their Arab allies and the domestic religious leaders who underpinned their domestic legitimacy. However, it was ultimately the Iran-Iraq war and later the Gulf War which cemented the dominance of Saudi Arabia and the other ‘petro states’ and also revolutionised regional diplomatic and security relationships. As Barnett wrote in 1996, ‘Arab states are exhibiting new patterns of interactions, departing from the promise of close association based on a shared identity and common values. Instead, they have converged on ‘rules of the game’ that revolve around sovereignty and are designed to protect the security of separate Arab states.’\textsuperscript{392} This new focus of regional security arrangements served to make Saudi Arabia more powerful, and also sounded the death knell of Nasserism and political pan-Arabism.\textsuperscript{393}


\textsuperscript{390} Ibid, p.37.


An unclassified 2008 US National Intelligence Council briefing laid out the thinking of US intelligence experts on this situation.\footnote{National Intelligence Council, \textit{Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan: Policies on Regional Issues and Support for US Goals in the Middle East}, 12 June 2008.} The consensus was that Egypt had lost its regional leadership role, a role which has been taken up by Saudi Arabia; that diplomacy in the region is increasingly characterised by multilateralism and ad hoc alliances of specific issues; and that Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia all believe that a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is crucial, the former two because this creates direct security concerns for them, and Saudi Arabia because it believes this will allow it to undermine Iran.

Indeed, the focus on Iran rather than Israel is a key feature, which distinguishes the foreign policy concerns of Saudi Arabia’s leaders and many of its elites from those of the other Arab states and many Saudi citizens. Since the revolution of 1979, and especially since the Iran-Iraq War, Saudi Arabia has seen Iran as a threat, both to its regional dominance and to the continued dominance of its favoured Sunni branch of Islam. Though there have always been tensions between Sunnis and Shiites since the death of the Prophet Muhammed, the revolution led to a particularly tense period since Saudi Arabia had maintained close relations with the Shah, and the new radical Islamist regime was keen to play up sectarian differences.\footnote{H Fürtig. \textit{Iran and Saudi Arabia: Eternal “Gamecocks?”}. (The Middle East Institute, 2009) <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/feb/1231.html> [accessed 27 August 2011].} These differences intensified when Saudi Arabia provided significant material support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, and induced other ‘petro states’ to do the same – few occasions Saudi Arabia had taken the lead on a major regional security issue.\footnote{M Bowen. \textit{The History of Saudi Arabia}, (2007), p. 120.}

Nevertheless, in 1980’s Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic relations with Iran but there was a remarkable rapprochement in the 1990s and early 2000s, with Saudi Arabia opposing aggressive US policy against Iran (in part for the practical reason that they felt they would bear the brunt of any retaliation).\footnote{T Lippman. ‘Saudi Arabia, Iran and the US’, \textit{The Daily Star}. Lebanon, (8 July 2008) <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/MEICommentaries/CommentariesArchive/tabid/624/ctl/Detail/mid/1531/xmid/355/xmfid/13/Default.aspx> [accessed 27 August 2011].} With Iran taking a growing role in the region, including in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, the leadership in Saudi Arabia has in recent years made even more aggressive diplomatic and rhetorical moves to counter Iranian influences, and arguably now sees this as perhaps its primary foreign policy challenge.\footnote{S Al Faisal. Substance of the speech of His Royal Highness Prince Al Faisal in University of Rice on Saudi Arabia and the International Oil Market. The JAMES A. BAKER III INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RICE UNIVERSITY. (2005) p10 (A transcript version of the presentation) Available at http://bakerinstitute.org/files/2421/ [Accessed 21 February 2013]} The unique influence (and growing importance) of Iran on official Saudi foreign policy thinking will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

It must be emphasised that this analysis is not meant to suggest that Saudi Arabia and Egypt are or have seen themselves as competitors for regional hegemony. In fact, relations between the two countries have mostly been
very tight, based around close ties of ethnicity and religion and similar international agendas, and they have tended to agree (at least publicly) on most of the major foreign policy questions of the day. Indeed, as the National Intelligence Council report makes clear, Saudi Arabia has never actively sought the same type of leadership role in the Arab world that Egypt had previously enjoyed, viewing itself more as a cultural and religious (rather than military or diplomatic) champion of the Arab world; its ‘hard’ foreign policy objectives have focused mainly on protecting its own security and acting as a bulwark against Iranian influence in the broader region.

Indeed, despite the recent shift towards a more multilateral (as opposed to pan-Arabic) regional security and foreign policy consensus, Saudi Arabia seems to conceive of its position in the world in largely in terms of its Arab culture and Muslim religious identity. This has led the Kingdom to maintain relatively close relations with other Arab countries even when significant disputes over policy were occurring behind the scenes. For example, unlike the US, the Saudis also never broke relations with Iran, despite providing over $25 billion in military assistance to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. And the Kingdom was willing to use the ‘oil weapon’ when deemed absolutely necessary by its Arab allies even when this would cause demonstrable harm to its economy and its all-important long-term relationship with the United States.

Still, despite not seeking the mantle of regional political leader, events in the Arab world have often had important domestic consequences for Saudi leaders, which have forced them to act. Of course, Saudi Arabia and many other Arab countries are not ‘post-colonial’ in the most literal sense; nevertheless, Saudi Arabia in particular has certainly been through a rapid and transformative state building experience since the discovery of oil in the 1930s, one in which it was profoundly influenced by outside forces. It is also situated in an important historical context, namely the development of the Islamic faith, which began in Mecca and Medina; the schism after the Prophet Muhammed’s death which led to a rift between Sunni and Shia Muslim; and the development and spread of Wahhabism in the 18th century. In addition to colouring Saudi relations with its Arab neighbours, these historical developments have also led to the Kingdom’s unique self-perception of itself as defender of a particular conception of the Islamic faith, a role which has led to increasing tension with Iran after the 1979 revolution, which the Saudi leadership arguably now sees as a more important foreign policy concern than the on-going conflicts with Israel. The next chapter will discuss how this situation developed and the impact it has had on Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy and its interpretation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The role of Iran

Saudi Arabia has long perceived itself as a leader of the Muslim faith, particularly because it is the home of Islam’s two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, which are visited by millions of pilgrims every year. In fact, before the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia entered into international concern primarily in this role as a pilgrimage destination.\(^{401}\) While the Saudi government and Saudi Arabia’s Ulama always took their religious role very seriously, the Islamic revival of the 1970s and the rise of political Islam led to important shifts in both the domestic balance of power and how the Saudi regime interacts with other countries, including both its Arab neighbours and its perceived Shiia rivals in Iran.

Before the Iranian revolution of 1979, however, Saudi Arabia and Iran enjoyed close ties. The two countries were in fact considered dual ‘pillars’ of the Gulf regional security order, particularly under the Nixon doctrine.\(^{402}\) The Nixon doctrine was a reaction to America’s strategic over-commitment, and ‘asserted that the United States would honour its treaty obligations and provide economic and military assistance to friendly nations. These states would provide the armed forces necessary to preserve the status quo in the region from Soviet threats, from internal revolution, and from anti-Western states within the region.

The preservation of the status quo would serve American interests regarding containment, the control of oil, and access to markets of these countries for Western business interests in general.’ To do this, the United States would appoint ‘deputies’ responsible for maintaining regional order in each area of the world, choosing conservative regimes it could supply with arms and other military support to provide regional stability and curb external and internal threats without requiring US intervention. The White House saw Iran and Saudi Arabia as a good test of this policy, for both Iran and Saudi Arabia were suitable for American purposes,’ as both had – although in different ways – the potential to assume leadership functions within the region. Both were conservative and anti-communist and would resist any changes to the status quo in the Gulf.\(^{403}\)

In addition to protecting the Gulf against Soviet influence, which was Washington’s main goal, the US ‘deputies’ were also expected to hold back other ideologies which were seen as disruptive, including both Nasserite ‘pan-Arabism’ and confrontational political Islam. This latter force placed a difficult burden on the Saudi state, as the monarchy had long used Islam to support its own legitimacy as well as to give it a role in the wider Arab world.\(^{404}\) However, this has also placed the Saudi monarchy which is often in the difficult position of serving as ‘the intermediary between two distinct political communities: a Westernised elite that looks to Europe and the United

\(^{403}\) Ibid. p. 6.
States as models of political development, and a Wahhabi religious establishment that holds up its interpretation of Islam's golden age as a guide. While Islam has long been the ‘bedrock’ of the Saudi monarchy’s domestic legitimacy, in the 1970s King Faisal attempted to pursue a heightened religious awareness while avoiding the ‘confrontational dualism embodied in the concepts of Dar al-Islam [‘house of Islam’; i.e. those countries where a Muslim could practice his faith freely] and Dar al-Harb [‘house of war’; i.e. Western countries where Islamic law was not in force]. Furtig suggests that this is partly because neither Faisal nor his father ‘had ever experienced the West in its full colonial guise. As a result they saw it primarily as the defender of all the free world, including the umma [the Arab world], against the evils of socialism and communism.’ This supports the Subaltern realist perspective, that an understanding of history and the nature of state formation are vital in understanding the actions of most contemporary states.

In Iran, the Shah likewise took his country’s role as part of the ‘dual pillar’ of regional security very seriously, seeing partnership with the United States as an important way to enhance the regime’s own prestige as well as its power in the region. This all changed with the revolution in 1979. The Islamic Revolution’s universalist principles and desire for a leading role in the umma ‘directly challenged the core identity of the Saudi state and ruling family. The Al Saud did not fear Shi’a ideas and visions as such, but were extremely upset about the fact that the competition had now primarily shifted to the field of religion, an area previously seen as their monopoly.’ This was not helped by the fact that Khomeini’s new regime directly challenged the Saudis’ presumption to be leaders of the Islamic world; their ability to act as proper stewards of Islam’s holiest sites; and in fact the monarchy itself, arguing that ‘Islam and a monarchy were mutually exclusive and that a monarchy was a deviation of Islam’s content and intention.’

In 1979, after the Shah had left Iran but before Khomeini had even been sworn in as Supreme Ruler, the Islamic Revolution had dramatically struck home in Saudi Arabia as well. On November 20, 1979 – the first day of the year 1400, according to the Islamic calendar – some 500 militants seized the Al-Masjid al-Haram or Grand Mosque in Mecca. After troops from the Interior Ministry were initially repulsed with heavy casualties, eventually elite counter-terrorist groups from Pakistan and France were called in to retake the shrine. In addition

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407 Ibid.
411 Ibid.
to being a very public black eye for the regime, this seizure highlighted important divisions within the Saudi Kingdom. The leader of the militants was Juhaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Saif al Utaibi, a member of one of the most powerful families from Najd and a pupil of the conservative Sheikh Abdul-Aziz bin Baz, who would later go on to become Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia. Echoing criticisms made a generation earlier by Abdul Aziz, with whom his grandfather had ridden, Juhaiman Saif al Otaibi, who proposed a return to a ‘purer’ form of Islam, declared his brother in law, Muhammad bin abd Allah al-Qahtani, to be the Mahdi, or redeemer of Islam, and announced that the ruling Al Saud dynasty had lost all of its legitimacy through too much Westernisation. The sudden and dramatic re-emergence of radical Islam in the Kingdom was particularly surprising considering the fact that the Saudi regime was one of the most explicitly Islamist in the world. As Ochsenwald writes:

‘In Saudi Arabia from its inception Islam has been the omnipresent and dominant factor in public life. The legitimacy of the dynasty and the ruling elite has rested upon a religious basis. It has been their duty to carry out the commandments of the faith, to uphold morality and justice, and to support and supervise such religious occurrences as the pilgrimage to Mecca. According to Saudis the constitution of the state has been and continues to be the Koran. The flag of Saudi Arabia has also graphically and dramatically presented the role of Islam in the state: it contains the Muslim declaration of faith and the crossed swords indicative of military support for Islam. The highly divergent regions, tribes, and cities have been held together by a common religion as well as by the political policies of the royal family.’

In other words, by threatening the Saudi regime’s Islamist credentials, the revolutionaries in Tehran were making not only a religious argument but also an explicit threat against the very legitimacy of the Saudi state itself. The uneasy role of Islam in Saudi political life will be discussed in much more depth in the following chapter, but it is important to point out here that events in Iran were having important domestic consequences in Saudi Arabia, which in turn would influence that country’s foreign policy activities.

The Iranian revolution thus dramatically shifted the balance of power in the Gulf, especially from the perspective of Saudi Arabia’s American allies. For the Saudis (and the Americans), Iranian extremism became the new regional threat to be countered, with pan-Arabism and even Communism moving somewhat into the background. Especially from the Saudi perspective, counterbalancing Iran was the new regional security prerogative. Still, Iran and its revolutionary regime had a certain amount of respect even in the Arab world, and were lauded by many Muslims, Shia and Sunni alike, including within the Kingdom, for their dedication to Islamic purity and principles. The main result of the upsetting of the traditional ‘triangular’ balance of power in the Gulf, comprising Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, was that support to Iraq needed to be increased.
When war broke out between Iran and Iraq, this provided a perfect opportunity for Saudi Arabia and other Western countries to destabilise the revolutionary regime and restore balance to the region. The war was started by Iraq and was directly related to the progress of the revolution in Iran, and particularly its effects on the uneasy regional balance of power in the Persian Gulf between Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Although Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein initially welcomed the revolution, having been an opponent of the deposed Shah, Khomeini’s aggressive revolutionary aims (including proposing a new ‘Pan-Islamism’ in the place of the now largely discredited Pan-Arabism ideology Iraq shared with Egypt) and particularly his calls for a Shia revolution in Iraq led to growing tensions between the two countries. Thus, while the war was started by Iraq (on the pretext that an assassination attempt against Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz was carried out by ‘Iranian agents’), it could be interpreted as a war of aggression against Iran, the Iranian regime’s efforts to foment a revolution within Iraq – as well as the desire of many international actors to contain the new Iranian regime – led to the war being perceived as necessary and justified, or at least useful.

As a result, despite potential misgivings they may have had, both the United States and Saudi Arabia supported the war effort, especially when the tide of battle turned against Iraq in 1982. When Syria closed the Kirkuk-Banias oil pipeline at the request of Iran, Iraq was left in a dire financial situation. Considering the potential consequences of an Iranian victory, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States began providing financial support to the Iraqis. While Saudi Arabia’s relations with the Iraqi regime were not warm before the war, the threat of Iran was seen as a greater issue, and so they provided what ultimately amounted to vast financial support for the war effort. As Brogan wrote, ‘Iraq has one of the most unpleasant governments in the region and had shown constant hostility to the monarchies in Jordan, the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. However, the threat of Persian fundamentalism was far more to be feared, and thus the conservative Arab states could not afford to let Iraq be defeated.’

This amount was indeed substantial: Saudi Arabia alone was estimated to have provided more than a billion US dollars per month to Iraq, with total assistance from all the Gulf States amounting to some $60 billion a year.

However, despite the financial lifeline from the Gulf States, the tide of the war turned again in 1982 and Iran officially invaded Iraq, declaring their goal of setting up a Shia republic in that country. At this time, Western

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418 Ibid.
420 Karsh.
and particularly US support for Iraq was stepped up and made more overt, with the United States providing economic aid, intelligence, and ‘dual use’ military equipment to the Iraqi government, while the French, other NATO nations, and even the Soviet Union supplied the Iraqis directly with weapons, tanks, fighter jets, and artillery. This can be contrasted with Iran, who by this time was being supplied mainly by North Korea, Libya, and China, and whose successful combined arms attacks early in the war had given way to increasingly desperate ‘human wave’ assaults against fortified Iraqi positions. The ‘tanker war’ in 1984 drew increased international attention, as both Iran and Iraq were oil exporters and the fighting endangered the supply of oil which was crucial to the world economy, leading to intervention by both the US and Soviet navies. Nevertheless, despite the huge amounts of foreign financial and material support to Iraq, the war dragged on until 1988, when Iran finally accepted the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 598 bringing an official end to the war.

When the war was still a year from its end, however, Iranian revolutionary rhetoric continued to cause problems within Saudi Arabia. These problems came to a head in 1987 when demonstrations at the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the Hajj pilgrimage. Some four hundred pilgrims were killed during the incident, two thirds of them Iranians, resulting in riots in Tehran during which the Saudi embassy was ransacked and a Saudi official beaten to death. This resulted in diplomatic ties between the two countries being cut in 1988. Iran’s bellicose policy towards Saudi Arabia was only partly driven by concern about Saudi financial support for their enemy Iraq. Rather, scholars have argued that this represented an ideologically driven approach to foreign policy taken by the revolutionary regime, which upset hundreds of years of balance between ideology and pragmatism in Iran’s foreign relations. However, after the revolution and through the 1980s ‘the spirit of ideological thoughts dominated decision-making concerning foreign policy. In this regard, revolutionary thoughts were top priorities of the new government and foreign policymakers.’ By ‘ideological’ what is meant here is revolutionary, fundamentalist Islam, a strain of thought, which had great resonance in Saudi Arabia even though the Iranian state was Shia rather than Sunni. Khomeini’s criticisms of other Arab regimes, which he believed had become either too secular or had embraced ‘American Islam’ and Westernisation, had a great deal of resonance on the ‘Arab street’ and led to serious tensions. As Amiri et al., wrote, after the revolution ‘the spirit of ideological thoughts dominated decision-making concerning foreign policy. In this regard, revolutionary thoughts were top priorities of the new government and foreign policymakers.’

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428 Ibid.
Government and foreign policymakers. This was especially the case with Saudi Arabia, culminating in the termination of diplomatic relations in 1988, which resulted not only from the 1987 Hajj incident but also from Saudi Arabia’s efforts to reduce the price of oil and thereby put financial pressure on the oil-dependent Iranian regime.

However, it was not long after the conclusion of the war that Iran pursued a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Starting in 1989, Saudi Arabia began conducting ‘back channel’ talks with the Iranian regime, and relations thawed further during the Gulf War, with official diplomatic relations being restored in 1991. Amiri et al argue that a large region for this rapprochement was the Iranian regime’s desire to improve its economic conditions, particularly by having a greater say in regional organisations, stronger trade links with important regional economic players, and perhaps most importantly more influenced in OPEC.

With the resumption of pilgrimage from Iran to Saudi Arabia, the Iranian regime also took strong measures to contain the Iranian pilgrims and prevent riots, uprisings, or other unrest from breaking out. However, despite Iran’s new ‘pragmatic approach’ in the early 1990s, regional tensions between the two powers remained high.

Another notable factor in this war, which marked a major shift in the dynamics of regional power in the Persian Gulf, was the US ambivalence over which side to support. The American opinion was aptly summed up by Henry Kissinger, who famously quipped that ‘it’s a pity they both can’t lose.’ Although on balance it is agreed that US actions (as it directs naval combat against Iran) benefitted Iraq, American support for Iraq was never as strong nor as overt as that provided by the Gulf States, or even other Western countries like France. This forced Saudi Arabia for the first time to take a leading, if indirect, role in maintaining the balance of power in the region. And, in a way, Kissinger’s wish came true, as both Iran and Iraq came out of the war significantly weakened and, in Iraq’s case, highly indebted to the Saudis and other Gulf States. This left the third pole of the traditional Persian Gulf ‘power triangle,’ Saudi Arabia, in a much stronger position – thus allowing it to emerge, in a way, as the ultimate victor in this conflict.

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441 The situation was, of course, further complicated by the Iran Contra scandal and revelations that President Reagan may have arranged the sale of weapons to the Iranians in exchange for the release of the American hostages held at the US embassy in Tehran.
The next major shift in the regional balance of power vis-à-vis Iran came with the Gulf War in 1991, which also helped to repair and strengthen Saudi Arabia’s relationship with its most important Western ally, the United States. After the war, with the overt threat from Iran’s revolutionary ideology significantly reduced, and Iraq nearly neutered, Saudi Arabia was in an even stronger regional position. However, the war in Iraq also raised uncomfortable questions of democratisation in the region. Some voices in the United States called for the replacement of the Iraqi regime with a more democratic one; while this ultimately did not occur, there were also concerns about the shape that the post-liberation Kuwaiti government would take. While Kuwait’s constitution allowed for democratic politics and limited the power of the ruling Al Sabah house, the Amir, who dissolved the elected Kuwaiti legislature in 1986, did not respect this constitution.442 However, the war brought to light some of the uncomfortable similarities between the two regimes in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia:

‘In both cases the royal families have in the past made promises of reform when under pressure, but have not implemented them later on. The human rights records of these regimes have been criticised by international bodies, although they pale into insignificance before that of the republican revolutionary regimes they adjoin, namely Iraq, Syria and Iran. The lack of democracy played a part, however, in the onset of this crisis: first, because it enabled Saddam Hussein to pose as the champion of popular resentment against the ‘Croesuses’, the parasitic rich monarchs of these states, both within the peninsula and among Arabs in other poorer states; and second, because in the case of Kuwait the disastrous diplomatic mishandling of the crisis by the al- Sabah family and the unnecessary provocation of the Iraqis over the oil issue was in part motivated by a desire to use conflict with Iraq to quell domestic dissent.”443

This fact, combined with the widespread discomfort among Arab populations about Saudi Arabia so actively assisting in the military defeat of a fellow Arab state, dramatically shifted the security balance in the region and weakened both the legitimacy of the Saudi state and the resolve of the Israelis to reach a settlement over the Palestinian issue.444 By strengthening the relative position of Iran, it also helped to refocus Saudi foreign policy on containing Iran while managing domestic dissent and concern about the relationship to the US and the on-going Israel-Palestine issues.445

Nevertheless, Iran’s relations with Saudi Arabia continued to improve throughout the 1990s, culminating in an official visit by President Mohammed Khatami to Saudi Arabia in February of 1998.446 A Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed later that year, followed by a security agreement in 2001.447 However, events in the post-September 11, 2001 era, including Iran’s nuclear efforts, put a greater strain

443 Ibid, p. 228.
444 Ibid, p. 231.
445 Ibid.
447 Ibid.
on their relationship. Though official diplomatic relations continued to improve, including a 2007 state visit to Saudi Arabia by Iranian President Ahmadinejad during which the Saudi press referred to the two countries as ‘brotherly nations.’ However, the nuclear programme in Iran has remained a bone of contention – though Saudi Arabia opposes sanctions, the Saudi state has warned that if Iran obtains a nuclear capability, Saudi Arabia will be forced to do so as well, a worrying prospect for the United States and other countries concerned about nuclear proliferation.

A more immediate problem, at least from Iran’s perspective, is the fallout from the war in Iraq, which has left a massive power vacuum in the region, which Saudi Arabia fears the Iranians are trying to fill. The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, articulated these concerns as early as 2005, noting that a civil war in Iraq could provide a major opportunity for the Iranians. As a result, Saudi foreign policy has once again shifted in the direction of Iran, in an attempt to maintain regional security by trying to ensure that Iraq does not fall into chaos.

Summary

This chapter aimed to assess and critically evaluate the role that the external factors have had on the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. The study focused on the main influences including the United States and the neighbours of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. The consideration of these factors has highlighted the important role that external factors play in the creation of a developing nation’s foreign policy, as noted by Ayoob in his Subaltern Realism perspective on International Relations. We have seen the impact that these factors have had through this critical analysis. Throughout the post-World War II period, Saudi Arabia has negotiated a delicate balancing act between the interests of, and relationship with, its most important ally – the United States – and its allegiance to the Arab and broader Muslim world, as well as its regional security concerns, such as the balance of power between Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran.

The study of these factors found that Saudi Arabia is heavily dependent on the US and that this complicates the relationship with the rest of the Middle East region, particularly with that of those countries that are actively anti-Western (such as Iran) who do not agree with Israel’s existence. These political and religious tensions have made the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy extremely difficult and it is clear that the country struggles to balance the two views, with the extremist anti-Israel view not sitting well with the decision to defend the peace process that effectively admits Israel’s sovereignty in the region. The chapter also analysed that the modern

development of the War on Terror campaign and possible links within Saudi Arabia with the terrorist network has also brought into question the Saudi-US relationship, although this needs to be maintained currently due to the military legitimacy that the US gives to the Kingdom and the raised level of power that it provides.

The analysis of the external factors suggests that they have a crucial and fundamental role in the overall development and direction of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy. Over the years, the country has supported the peace talks for the Arab-Israeli crisis and attempted to highlight its Arabic allegiances. The role of the US and its power, combined with the lack of military strength that Saudi Arabia has (which has increased dependency on the US) means that the government in Saudi Arabia has needed to juggle these issues and relationships, aiming not to antagonise its relations with the US and Iran, because the balance of power in the region is fragile and finely aligned at the current time. Despite the importance of the external international factors, this study also needs to assess the internal influences on Saudi Arabian foreign policy. It can be considered at this stage that there are other potential factors at play in the formation of the Saudi decision making process.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) presents an in-depth analysis of the internal factors that impact on Saudi foreign policy. The importance of domestic factors needs to be assessed in the same way that the international factors were examined and in this manner, the chapter analyses the impact that two conflicting groups (liberals and conservatives) have on the direction of foreign policy in the country. The completion of this analysis, coupled with the results from this chapter, will provide this chapter with enough information to be able to conduct a comprehensive discussion of the success of using the Subaltern Realism perspective to explain the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia.
CHAPTER FOUR

Saudi Foreign Policy as a Reaction to Domestic Influences

Overview

Complex interactions between different international forces would create a difficult situation for foreign policymakers in any country, but in Saudi Arabia, things are made considerably more complex by the additional domestic factors which weigh on the foreign policymaking process – particularly considering their impact on the delicate Israel-Palestine issue. The previous chapter discussed the nature of the Western influences, mainly the United States that has a diplomatic and key strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia, and key Middle Eastern influences and regional neighbours. The situation concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict is clearly a complex issue when analysing the international factors, mainly because of the staunch support given to Israel by the United States, Saudi Arabia’s link to this through its relationship with the US, and the fact that Arabic nations are firmly against the position of any form of Israel in the region. This current chapter identifies the domestic factors that play a role in the development of foreign policy, aiming to discuss whether the complexity and multitude of factors that exists in the global arena is also present internally. The chapter will consider these internal, domestic factors – how they are linked to the international factors described in Chapter Four and the important role they play in the making of foreign policy in the Kingdom. The first part of this chapter will provide some background to the key internal and domestic conflicts within the Kingdom and their role in influencing foreign policy. The second part will then draw on interviews conducted with members and activists from the key liberal and conservative groups within the country to explain and analyse how these factors play out in practice, and what constraints they place on Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy options going forward.

The Role of Internal Factors in Saudi Foreign Policy

Saudi has been the spread of different Islamic ideas and believes, which includes Sunnis belonging to all four jurisprudential schools, Sufis, separate branches of Shiism and of course Wahhabism as the only Muslim denomination in the country. Therefore, this section will examine Wahhabis by providing brief history; also it will discuss the role of established Ulama as an internal factor.

As mentioned in chapter two, since the founding of the modern Saudi state by Abdul-Aziz bin Saud in 1932, Saudi Arabia has been a monarchy ruled by the House of Saud. According to the Basic Law, the King must be selected from among Abdul-Aziz bin Saud’s sons and their direct descendants, a task, which is now the responsibility of an
Allegiance Council set in up in 2007. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy with no elected legislature or other representative bodies; all executive, judicial, and legislative power lies formally in the hands of the king, though informally decisions are typically made by taking into account the views of other members of the Royal Family (and other important Saudi families). Though the current King Abdullah was both before and after his accession a major proponent of further democratic reform in the Kingdom, so far these have been extremely limited. For example, in 2003, a ‘National Dialogue Forum’ was set up in which selected citizens were permitted to debate national issues in a highly proscribed way. However, it should be noted that in Saudi Arabia, a strong emphasis is placed on consensus in decision-making, as a principle of Islamic law. As the Middle East Policy Council points out, ‘Consensus, whether institutionalised or not, is a key method for legitimizing group decisions throughout the Arab world. All rulers can be arbitrary, but in the Arab world, if there is a strong consensus on a given issue, ignoring it entirely can be done only at one’s peril.’ They note that consensus, or ‘ijima,’ which is ‘sanctified in Islamic law,’ is ‘one major characteristic common to all Arab regimes, republican as well as monarchical’. In short, while the monarchy in Saudi Arabia may be absolute, its freedom of action is in fact quite limited by internal, domestic factors, as well as the external factors traditionally considered by realist scholars.

Groups outside of the Royal Family who would call for more democracy or greater political participation are potentially at extreme risk since free expression of these sorts of ideas is forbidden. Nevertheless, as the Saudi state has modernised and many Saudi citizens have been educated abroad or spent time in Western countries, the desire for a more participatory and representative form of government has been growing appreciably. One reason for this is corruption, which is endemic within a state where there is no distinction between state property and the personal assets of the King and the Royal Family – a fact that is openly acknowledged by some members of the Saudi Royal Family itself. However, the foreign policy concerns of the Saudi people have also heavily influenced the movement for more democratic institutions – notably among those who are opposed to the close alliance with the United States, and/or who feel sympathy for the Palestinian cause and would like their government to do more in that arena.

Thus, in the long term, the two biggest structural issues with the Saudi state which influence the creation and implementation of foreign policy, particularly towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, are the political role of Islam and the demand for democratic reforms (which, as will be explored later in this chapter, could open the door for

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radical Islamic elements as well as more traditional liberals). The two issues will be taken up in the following sections.

Islam and the legitimacy of the State

As noted repeatedly above, Islam is not just the majority religion of the Saudi people, but a fundamental part of the state itself and the foundation of its legitimacy. It also places limits on their activities. As Okruhlik states, ‘Islam remains a double-edged sword for the al-Saud. It grants members legitimacy as protectors of the faith, yet it constrains their behaviour to that which is compatible with religious law’. Indeed, the Ulama, also known as the Al ash-Sheikh, who are the descendants of Sheikh Muhammed ibn ‘Adb al-Wahhab, have shared power with the House of Saud for over 300 years.458 While the king is officially the country’s supreme religious leader and is in charge of overseeing Islam’s holy sites and the hajj (pilgrimage) – a responsibility, which the monarchy has always taken very seriously – the Ulama are the ultimate arbiters of religious matters, and are responsible for helping to reach a consensus, at least among the ruling houses. In other words, ‘while the house of Saud provides the kingdom with its strength and maintains continuity, the al-Shaykh family has the religious-moral authority legitimizing the government’.459

Many scholars have argued that a failure to understand the role of the Ulama in Saudi politics has made it difficult for many outside observers to understand the Kingdom’s foreign policy activities and its sometimes-puzzling decisions.460 This is partly because traditional realist approaches to foreign policy which have held sway for the past several decades fail to take much account at all of domestic factors, and particularly those arising from institutions which are not formalised. As Obaid puts it, ‘[l] acting as they do formal control over policymaking, the power of the Ulama is missed by many observers in the West, who mistakenly assume that their influence is limited to the religious sphere’.461 To truly understand Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy, it is vital to comprehend not only the Ulama but their changing structural role within Saudi society as well.

While the political-religious alliance between the House of Saud and the Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam (represented by the Ulama) had been held since the middle of the eighteenth century,462 the relationship between the religious elites and the state has varied over time. In terms of foreign policy, one of the most important incidents in which the Ulama’s power yielded important policy results was the oil embargo of 1973, which surprised many observers

460 Ibid.
462 Ibid.
in the West. Obaid argues that this decision came at the behest of the Ulama, who convinced King Faisal that this action would help to cement Saudi Arabia’s role as a leader of Islam and of the Arab world, and which would demonstrate Saudi Arabia’s unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause. Importantly, these arguments were persuasive enough to overcome the King’s very real misgivings about the short-term problems this would cause for Saudi Arabia’s relationship with its key ally, the United States, as well as his worries about the longer-term economic consequences for the Kingdom. In this case, the Ulama also played an important role in articulating popular resentment against Israel for its aggression during the 1967 war. In summary, ‘the Saudis implemented the embargo not primarily to fulfil a promise or a threat, nor to increase the price of oil, nor even as a weapon to help destroy Israel, but to satisfy the growing frustration of the Ulama and pre-empt internal demands that the United States be punished for its role in the Israeli victory’. 463

However, despite this important foreign policy coup, there was a widespread perception that as Saudi Arabia modernised in the 60s and 70s, the religious leaders (and Islamist sentiment more generally) were playing a smaller and smaller role, in many ways mirroring the aggressive secularisation of the Shah’s regime in Iran, with which the Saudi regime was moderately friendly at the time. During these decades, members of the traditional al-Sheikh group lost important top posts they had traditionally held in the education and justice ministries.464 Furthermore, alims (members of the Ulama) in the ‘60s and ‘70s were also denied key government portfolios in areas important to the modern state, like defence, the economy, foreign affairs, aviation, and so forth. ‘All in all,’ Blight writes, ‘the Saudi governments of the 1960s and 1970s represent a decline in the political force of the Ulama class. It seems that the price for their [the al-Sheiks’] political survival was the concession that their highest leaders would become ministers, and hence lose their independence in Saudi politics’.465

It should be noted that these structural changes in the relationship between the Ulama and the state were not necessarily representative of a generally secularising trend in Saudi society, but rather an attempt by the House of Saud to impose greater political control over a previously independent group of important religious scholars, as part of a plan to build a modern state based on oil money and security guarantees obtained through a close relationship with the United States. This relationship was particularly distasteful to the Ulama, as the traditionalist Wahhabi branch of Sunni of which they were guardians preached a strict separation of Muslims from non-Muslims.466

Viewed in this context, then, the revolution of 1979 in Iran must have been extremely worrying for the Saudi

463 Ibid.
465 Ibid, p. 44.
Royal Family, and not simply because of the new revolutionary regime’s aggressive rhetoric against the Saudi monarchy. What the revolution showed was that popular resentment against a government perceived as being too cosy with the West could explode into a deadly rebellion. This is precisely what happened, albeit in limited form, when a group of militants took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Interestingly, while King Faisal’s immediate reaction was to consult with the *Ulama*, as this was a religious matter, they remained ‘aloof’ and ‘indecisive’ throughout the incident – only giving permission to use armed force, for example, 36 hours after the attack. In terms of the political development of the *Ulama*, the Mecca incident marked a new low point for the Saudi *Ulama* and provided irrefutable proof of their political weakness’, Bligh argues. Unlike their revolutionary counterparts in Iran, the religious leadership of Saudi Arabia was unwilling, at least at that time, to directly counter what was widely perceived as a growing secularisation of the state and Western orientation in foreign policy. Though in any realistic assessment the Saudi state was still quite conservative and could only be considered a reluctant ally of the United States, especially on regional foreign policy matters (where it had just six years earlier shown its determination to help the Palestinian cause), this conservative orientation was increasingly not conservative enough for a significant portion of the Saudi population.

The Saudi Royal Family, however, reacted to this incident by redoubling its commitment to Islam as a key element of state power. While unequivocally rejecting extremism, for example, by trying and publicly beheading sixty-three militants involved in the Grand Mosque seizure, they also stepped up high-profile public enforcement of Islamic codes. With these new rules in place, and a greater role for the *Ulama* in government assured, the alliance between the House of Saud and the *Ulama* was able to mitigate popular resentment against the actions of the regime, which resentment was increasingly focused on its foreign policy activities (such as the alliance with the United States).

The ability of this alliance to quell popular dissent began to break down, however, after the Gulf War. Before allowing the Americans onto Saudi soil, even for the express purpose of defending the Kingdom from imminent attack, the Saudi government took the extraordinary step of convening 350 Muslim scholars and leaders in Mecca to debate the decision – showing just how important the government considered the *Ulama*’s opinions and support, even in existential matters of state security. Despite the fact that the American troops were considered infidels and should not be allowed onto Saudi territory under a strict Wahhabi interpretation, a fatwa was issued stating that they would be allowed. Reportedly, this decision was reached only after the *Ulama* were shown

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satellite photos (provided by Dick Cheney and Norman Schwartzkopf) of Iraqi troops massing on the Saudi border, and was given only on the condition that the troops would respect Muslim traditions and would immediately leave once no longer needed; the Ulama also secured a more prominent role on the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and Propagation of Virtue, or ‘morality police’.  

However, after the war, the Americans decided to keep their contingent of troops in place (in part to continue enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq), and the Saudi government’s decision not to openly object to this created tremendous resentment among the people and the more radical elements of the Ulama. As Okruhlik writes, ‘Festering anger suddenly exploded with the Gulf War. The stationing of American troops in the country during the war transformed an inchoate resurgence of Islamic identity into an organised opposition movement’.  

This anger also led directly to two terrorist bombings in 1995 and 1996, which killed twenty-four American servicemen.  

Perhaps more importantly, at least from the US and global perspective, Osama bin Laden also cited the presence of US troops on Saudi soil as one of his primary motivations for waging global jihad, and removing them as one of Al Qaeda’s key strategic objectives.  

At the start of the Iraq war, the Saudi government prohibited American forces there from carrying out air strikes from bases on Saudi soil, with the Saudi defence minister claiming there was ‘no reason’ for American troops to be there. In 2003, the Americans withdrew most of their forces from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, an event, which the Saudi regime managed in classic hedging fashion, claiming that they did not ask the Americans to move.  

Nevertheless, the removal of American forces can only have been met with relief from the Saudi state.  

Despite the rising tide of populist Islamic sentiment in Saudi Arabia, the regime made little effort to strike back, constrained as it was by its close relationship with the Ulama, even when terrorist attacks were being carried out against the government. Instead, ‘[t]he government’s response to the Islamists’ demands combined indecisiveness, appeasement, incremental reform, and some threats’.  

This is likely because the Saudi regime recognised that, despite its status as guardian of Islam’s holiest sites, its open and avowed piety, and the important role played by the Ulama in making government policy, its stability and legitimacy were more vulnerable to Islamists than to any other political or social force in the kingdom.  

Okruhlik argues that populist Islamist movements have achieved success in Saudi Arabia for three main reasons:

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471 Ibid.  
first, they combine a material critique of the regime (in a country where real per capita incomes have declined nearly 50 per cent since the height of the oil boom) with a symbolic one; they understand the ‘power of the embedded social structure in which they operate,’ that is, the importance of Islam within all strata of Saudi society; and they ‘contest the historical narrative of the founding of the kingdom,’ striking directly at the regime’s legitimacy.\textsuperscript{477} Because Islam is such a powerful force in Saudi society, ‘[a]lthough Islam has often been used by the ruling family to bolster the prevailing order, it is also used to oppose that order.’\textsuperscript{478}

In fact, as the next section will show, political Islam is a far greater threat to Saudi legitimacy and the Saudi state than Western-oriented liberal democratic critics. As Okruhlik argues, ‘Islamists are by far more coherent, powerful, and organised than any other social force in Saudi Arabia, including those based on nationalism, regional identity, or business activity. Islamism provided the vocabulary, symbols, and historic reference points that resonated with the population’.\textsuperscript{479} However, in recent years the two groups have combined into a more powerful form of resistance movement that incorporates populist Islam with anti-monarchist, pro-democracy sentiments.

\textbf{The Problems of Democratic Reform}

The Saudi Arabian regime’s legitimacy is both based on and threatened by the ‘double edged sword’ of Islam. However, a second major strand of criticism against the state is based on its undemocratic nature. The call for more democracy has not, to date, presented as substantial a threat (nor as substantial an influence on the government) as political Islam, even after the uprisings during the so-called ‘Arab Spring’. However, pressure on the regime to open up and increase political participation has been growing – often alongside, and often in conjunction with, Islamist critiques.

The movement for true democracy in Saudi Arabia along liberal, Western lines remains fairly miniscule, even as discontent with the regime has grown and many members of the Saudi elites have spent time in Western countries and experienced the benefits of democratic government first-hand. Abdul Rahman al Rashed, editor of the London-based \textit{al Sharq al Awsat}, effectively summarised the view of the Saudi elites.

In a 2003 editorial on ‘The Culture of Elections’ in which he argued that ‘Saudi society and government are too conservative to embark upon a complete opening up. Saudi Arabia wants to avoid the democratic experience in Algeria, which resulted in street clashes and pain for all. Nor does Saudi Arabia wish to be another Iran or repeat

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid.
the experience of Hitler who obtained power by election’. 480

However, in recent years there have been increasing calls for more openness, more public debate, and more opportunities for the public to participate in government policymaking. ‘What many Saudi Arabians are talking about,’ writes Okruhlik, echoing the elite sentiment expressed by al Rashed, ‘constitutes neither full competitive democracy nor absolute monarchy. Rather, it is a voice in governance, and the rule of law’. 481

The pressure for more democracy is based on greater education and exposure to outside ideas, as well, perhaps, as the long-running corruption of the Saudi Royal Family. Hertog writes:

‘The level of education has risen, ideological cleavages are increasingly salient – witness the lively press debate on issues of cultural opening – and the needs and expectations of various status groups are becoming more differentiated. It appears that a more formal representation of different groups is imperative to enable interest aggregation of various groups and to sustain social peace in the long run.’ 482

The accession of King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud to the throne in 2005 was seen as a major opportunity for democratic reform, which he had long supported. 483 However, the reforms he has implemented so far have been criticised as mere ‘Potemkin democracy’ by critics. This, it is argued, is a result of irreconcilable internal divisions: ‘Plagued by contradictory attitudes, consensus is seemingly impossible, and formation of any coherent policy to meet the nation’s needs appears beyond reach’. 484 Such reforms include heavily managed municipal elections in 2005, and a denial of liberal calls for an elected shura (consultative council) even though that body, which is currently appointed by the King, has none of the traditional authorities over budgeting, resource allocation, or policy held by a traditional legislature. Yamani argues, however, that while these moves have made little impact on actual governance or policymaking structures, they have helped to spur an informal debate about the direction the Kingdom should take in the future.

Okruhlik notes that any portrayal of internal Saudi politics in terms of a division between US-allied ‘moderates’ and Wahhabist extremists is oversimplified, as the regime’s long reign has led to the suppression of other strains of thought within Saudi society. ‘The depth of royal coercion has meant that other voices have not been allowed to flourish,’ he writes. ‘Today, there is not a viable alternative to the ruling family that could unite the disparate parts

of the country.\textsuperscript{485}

This is partly due to internal divisions within the House of Saud, as well as the concerns of the Ulama, which – given the need for consensus in decision-making – can lead to a pace of reforms which appears unbearably slow from the outside. Interestingly, one of the forces which is pushing most heavily for democratic reforms is the radical Islamist groups, who in recent years have formed alliances with more liberal democratic reformers in an attempt to make the public well-known on important issues, including the Israel-Palestine conflict. An important aspect of these groups is that they aim to refine the official Wahhabi religious doctrine to include provisions for an Islamic form of democratic governance, which could lead, one commentator has argued, to an age of ‘Post-Wahhabism’\textsuperscript{486}. This belief was offered in the early part of the twentieth century, and it is important to note that this movement has led to growing unrest in Saudi Arabia by the overall population that has looked for a growing participation in the country’s political development. Having said this, the relative ease with which the Saudi government dealt with the Arab Spring, as it manifested itself in the country, would suggest that the work by the two groups still has some way to go to make an impact in the Kingdom. It has been noted though that because there exist these ‘new and revolutionary attitudes from the government, one may read that there are some awakenings of the necessity for a revision of Wahhabism among the ruling elites in the nation’\textsuperscript{487}.

However, the dominant group of pro-democracy Islamists still consists of those who would like to use the power of the ballot box to unseat the House of Saud and replace it with a government deemed more Islamically pure – even if that regime immediately rolls back those democratic reforms (or places severe restrictions on them), as happened in Iran. Thus, we can end this section with a quotation from Halliday, who notes that:

\begin{quote}
‘There is the fact, unique to the region, that many of those pressing from below for democracy have themselves an undemocratic programme: the Islamist forces, which in most cases appear to be the strongest contenders for power in a more open context, aim not to establish a democratic government or one that respects human rights or international norms, but to impose their own populist but coercive regimes, as the example of Iran shows. The results of recent elections in Jordan and Algeria indicate that in exchange for the established and often stale undemocratic regimes, vigorous and popularly backed undemocratic regimes are waiting to take their place.’\textsuperscript{488}
\end{quote}

Through this discussion, it is evident that if the Saudi government were replaced, it would most likely be replaced by an undemocratic regime that had democratic tendencies but would not necessarily offer any more chance of democracy to the people as the previous regime.

\textsuperscript{487} J Cho. ‘Transforming Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia.’ \textit{Torch Trinity Center for Islamic Studies Journal} (2009), pp.103-104.
‘On the ground’; examining the views of different Saudi factions

The correspondence with the different Saudi factions regarding their views on foreign policy is presented in this section. The work considers the responses to correspondence conducted with members of two main political factions in the Saudi Arabia, in order to evaluate how their view and attitudes influence their approach to foreign policy topics. These groups are Islamist or the conservatives group (majority), and the liberalist group (minority).

Correspondence analysis: the Liberal group

Correspondence was achieved with 19 liberal members. Several participants have provided similar answers therefore, the analysis has been minimised to twelve main participants who provided answers with most clarity. Revealing the most significant information, these responses were deemed sufficient and comprehensive enough to represent the liberal view (the chosen correspondents are mostly activist and presenting liberalist ideas through media). The questions asked and a summary of the answers is included in Appendix A.

Several important points can be brought into focus from the responses to these interviews. Firstly, it is important to highlight that, even though liberals are presented here as a single group, they are not necessarily the same. They have aims and objectives that are slightly different: for instance, they have different conceptions of the origins of the movement to which they subscribe. Respondent 1 found no traceable start point while respondent 2 felt able to be as specific as stating ‘fifty years ago’. Respondent 4, suggested after the Gulf War Liberalism became active in Saudi. Respondent 5 stated that the liberal school has been established decades ago. However, after the event of 9/11 and the failure of the Islamic school, liberal activists have become known in Saudi Arabia. Respondents 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 have answered after 9/11.

Another quite striking difference is the response to the question of whether the interviewees had ‘ever been subjected to any acts of harassment restricting your activities from members of other movements or from other public institutions’. Respondent 1 answered that they had (in extreme ways) and respondent 3 has been imprisoned for two years’ without charge. The second respondent, however, simply stated that they did not. Perhaps a bias here could come from the respective positions of employment that these respondents hold, with respondent 1’s position, are arguably more high profile. There is a general consensus, however, about the aims of liberals: peace; freedom, and modernisation are key themes, which commonly and repeatedly occur. Respondent 4 noted that: ‘unfortunately, I was not aware of how powerful the conservatives are until the day when I had an argument with a religious figure and been arrested the next day.’ Respondent 5 left this section blank, whilst Participant 6 stated that her husband is not permitted to travel outside the country and did not provide more explanations.
As most of the liberals’ ideas contradict the Islamic school, they could be regarded as extreme opposites. Liberals support modernisation, development, and women rights, and achieving peace with Israel, while the Islamic school opposes any kind of relationship with Israel. Indeed, as respondent 2’s answer to the question of ‘how different is the current Saudi liberal movement from Islamic form of Liberalism?’ illustrates, their very aims, contexts, and boundaries are different. He states that ‘Current Liberalism calls for freedom, democracy and reform, but Islamic Liberalism views freedom within limits of Islamic teachings’. Such contradictions between two main currents in the Kingdom have placed the government in a critical position. The King is in a position that requires him to try and satisfy both groups, but he tends to comply with the majority, which is increasingly represented by the conservatives. The current liberal group is mostly occupied by those who have experienced democratic countries (many of the youth that have been educated outside of the country). It also includes key figures in education in the country and certain political supporters as will be shown below.

The government might take a few careful steps to modernise and open up to the world, but their decisions and discussions are usually secretive and taken in consultation with the conservative Ulama leaders, and the proceedings of these discussions are rarely announced in public, especially regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is telling to note that there was consensus among the interview responses regarding the progress that these liberals felt that they had made: they felt that they had achieved greater acceptance, and overall growth in followers. It could be suggested, then, that this faction is growing and will increasingly need to be taken into account as both domestic and foreign policy decisions are made. It is also interesting to consider that it could be suggested that since the liberal aim of freedom within the Saudi State is cited as so key and so central: in short, they are more concerned as a group with internal affairs and state development. However, liberals are implicitly concerned with International Relations by virtue of the fact that they admire the freedom and liberal practices exhibited in Europe and the US. Indeed, the interviewees also indicated their desire to be viewed favourably by Western countries. Any move towards Liberalism would not only move Saudi Arabia further towards those countries, but also further away from other more conservative nations in the Middle East.

Since there is no official recognition for political parties in Saudi Arabia, it is almost impossible to provide an accurate percentage on how large the Liberal group is in the Kingdom. However, Dr Turki al Hamad claims that the Liberal party is the silent majority in Saudi Arabia. This group mostly occupies important positions in the education sector, press and media. A key figure within this group is Dr Turki al Hamad a Saudi Arabian political analyst, journalist, novelist and a previous professor in politics. Al Hamad used to write for al-Watan, al-Riyadh and the Middle East newspaper. In 2012, Dr. al Hamad was arrested over his tweets calling Saudis to correct their


490 Ibid
beliefs, purify Islam and to refer to pure religion of Prophet Mohammed. However, he was released after five months and all charges were dropped. 491

A key figure within the group is Turki Al Sudairi, the editor-in-chief of Al-Riyadh newspaper and a chairman of board of directors of Saudi Journalists Association (SJA), and the head of the Gulf Press Association.492 Significantly, all newspapers printed in Saudi Arabia are pro-government but three influential Saudi newspapers express relatively liberal ideas. These are Al-Riyadh, Al-watan and Okaz. Another key figure is Al-Watan’s editor, Jamal Kashoggi, a very influential journalist who served in the newspaper until May 2003. Kashoggi’s editorship lasted for less than two months (54 days), ending when he was fired by Minister of Interiors,493 Prince Nayf (who was an important figure to the conservatives and used to arrest journalist for their pro-liberal ideas) soon after he published a critique of the Islamic establishment. Kashoggi was appointed again as an editor in chief for Al-Watan and resigned on May 2010.494 This resignation came three days’ after he chose to publish a column by poet Ibrahim Al-Almaee criticising Wahhabism and Islamic rule.495

Another popular and well-known figure in Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations is Turki Al-Dakhil, a journalist in Al-watan newspaper and the host of Edaat, the interview programme on Al-Arabiya news channel.496 Al-Dakhil interviews governmental officials, academics, and influential journalists, focusing on political and sensitive issues and promoting debate among both liberal and Islamist factions.

Another important figure is Dr Badria al-Bishr, a multi-award winning Saudi columnist and novelist.497 She is a professor at King Saud University and hosts a television programme devoted to discussions about women’s rights and social concerns. Dr al-Bishr is married to the well-known actor Nasser al-Qasabi. He is famous amongst Arab for his various roles in the television series Tash ma Tash along with the fellow actor Abdullah al-Sadhan. Al-Qassabi and al-Sadhan have poked fun at the Islamist establishment on several occasions in the television series, resulting in both actors’ receiving death threats. 498

Dr Mohammed al-Zulfa, an associate history professor at King Saud University, graduated from Cambridge University and, is currently a member of the Saudi Council. Al-Zulfa has presented a proposal to the council for discussion, calling for lifting the ban from women driving. The council has refused to vote or discuss such a
proposal and the conservatives have mobbed him on television. Al-Zulfa was invited to popular television shows in the Middle East and was challenged by key figures from the conservative side who attempted (in their views) to guide him to the right path of Islam. Al-Zulfa stood his ground and to this day, he publicly supports women rights and other liberal ideas.

Another key figure is Dr. Hashim Abdo Hashim, the current editor-in-chief of Okaz newspaper, a university professor and a former member of the Saudi Council. Dr. Hashim has published a number of articles such as, *The True Era of Reform*, where he criticises the Islamists for being an influential power behind extremism. 499

Moreover, there is Dr. Ghazi al-Gosaibi, a Saudi Arabian liberal politician, diplomat, technocrat, poet and novelist. 500 He was appointed Minister of Industry and Electricity in 1976, a Minister of Health from 1983 to 1984, an ambassador to Bahrain and then to the United Kingdom, a Minister of Water and served as Minister of Labour until his death in 2010. 501 Dr. Al Gosaibi has contributed to the Arabic literature and his novels mostly discussed the topic of corruption. While a Minister of Labour, he argued that women should be offered more job opportunities. 502 Dr. al-Gosaibi has called for a democratic reform in the Kingdom, also, was an apparent critic of the Saudi conservative society and was labelled by conservatives as a western, infidel, secular and hypocrite. 503

In summary, it is clearly evident that this group holds crucial positions in the press, media, and education. However, whilst these groups are influential on an unofficial basis, they continue to be denied a voice in the government. Therefore, they exist as an indirect as opposed to a direct influence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 504

**Correspondence analysis: the Conservatives group: (The Islamic School)**

Correspondence was completed with several conservative group members as well. Getting responses was not an easy task, as this group would not tolerate any questions challenging their ideas. The questions asked and a summary of the main findings and most common responses can be found in Appendix B.

The responses given in these interviews were very much in line with the common perception of the conservative factions in Saudi Arabia. The line given in the interviews was immovable, with absolutely no room to question the ideals of the conservative school, and certainly no allowance or endorsement of the liberal school. They stated

499 Ibid
501 Ibid
502 Ibid
503 Ibid
categorically that, in their opinion, there was no means for compromise or for the two opposing schools to be compatible, confirming once more the suggestion that they are opposites rather than different versions of a particular ideology.

This group is the strongest group in terms of reach and influence after the government itself: this was not only intimated through the responses given, but can be witnessed through wider, practical examples as well. Conservative groups have the same kind of power in most Arab states and receive support from the state, which in return, provides this faction or current all necessary means to gain its satisfaction. They have different means of pressuring the state to achieve favourable policy outcomes; they do not rule out violence (although this was softened in the interviews with the response given that ‘We do not harass any liberals unless they commit an offence against the religion’) and will often take advantage of violence to press their demands even if they do not actively condone actions like terrorism. The government pays attention to the opinions and demands of this group in all areas, religious, economic, and political, although the government does not satisfy all their demands. In many cases, conservatives may demand things that are not in accordance with the objectives of the government. For example, one respondent who cannot be named but who is a cleric, stated that because of his opposition to allowing the mixing of two genders in one university, the King had expelled him from the Kingdom at once as a warning to other clerics not to go against the wishes of the Royal Family.

The power of the conservatives does not derive entirely from their religious nature, since all citizens cannot go against Islam without being considered as infidels. In addition, the power of this group is not due to the number of its members, but rather its power is a result of their members filling high-ranking seats since many of them head educational, judicial, and fatwa-issuing departments.

In addition, many conservatives head educational departments which formulate school syllabi and determine how students are taught, so that they can choose what they feel appropriate and what serves their aims away from the eyes of supervision – at least until the 9/11 attacks. This was particularly alluded to within the interviews, with the respondents noting that they ‘supervised’ the content of the curriculum. After the attacks, Saudi authorities have enabled all other groups, including more moderate sects and liberals in the Kingdom to participate (to a certain extent) in formulating the syllabus and omitted anything that offends or deform the religion: for example, some of the religious school books describe the West in a very barbaric way, and photos were banned from books as they were considered against the religion, although there is no evidence in Islam of such claim. It is unknown whether this was a liberalising move, or a conservative reaction to 9/11, but it is felt that the incident had a dramatic impact on society and perhaps indicates the influence of external factors and the decision not to anger the United States, particularly because of Osama Bin Laden’s ties to the Kingdom.
Moreover, this group represents the judicial authority in the Kingdom to the extent that not any person with a degree from any major university can apply to become a judge or a lawyer unless he was a member of a conservative group. Every member of the judiciary must be a graduate of one of the known Islamic universities – even law students are not allowed to fill such seats unless they are conservatives. This group has been criticised by many citizens in Saudi Arabia, as being extremist and adopting radical interpretations of Islamic laws in issues such as divorce, testimonies and issues concerning women mostly. They also have been accused of manipulating laws and accepting bribes in several cases. The power of the conservatives can also heighten sectarian tensions between the Sunni majority and the Shia minority, who are vital to the state as they control much of the oil supply. For example, not only is the testimony of non-Muslims often discounted, but also the testimony of Shias can be considered less valid in some courtrooms.  

Conservatives monopolise the issuing of fatwas exclusively, which are vital to the operation of the government, including foreign policy. The King will typically seek a fatwa before taking any decision to which religious objections might be raised: for example, before attempting to recapture the Grand Mosque, or before inviting American troops to defend the country. Fatwas are also issued on everyday topics to answer religious questions raised by common citizens, and thus shape the daily life of Saudi citizens in many important ways. The Ulama extract Sharia laws from Quran and Sunnah and issue fatwas determining what is lawful and what is not. They issue their fatwas using all means of communication with the public, such as newspapers, magazines, and even TV shows; they have their own channels which receive calls from Muslims all over the world. On the other hand, the government provides conservatives with complete freedom to issue fatwas, as they want to use religion as a veil, so that the reality of the non-religious nature of the government shall not be uncovered and then be toppled by the conservative majority, which is a risk that the government would not dare to take. Perhaps the most overriding and crucial finding from the responses of questionnaires completed by conservatives is that the majority have the exact same stances in their opinions about Liberalism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. They strongly oppose liberals and shall not rest unless they hinder any of their liberal demands and actions.

Conservatives are against establishing any relations with Israel and believe that if the Kingdom attempts to establish any such relations, which they interpret to mean that the Kingdom has finally recognised the state of Israel, this would be seen as a betrayal of Muslims worldwide. Conservatives consider the issue of the conflict from a religious view more than a nationalistic one. They believe that boycotting Israel is a duty of all Muslim nations and any nation, which recognises Israel, is not truthful to Islam and is considered as a traitor. In addition, conservatives believe they have more power than they actually have, which makes them take decisions firmly and  

consider themselves as effectively the government.

Discussion

It is essential to provide a brief critical discussion of the information gained from the correspondence with both the participants from the liberal and the conservative groups, assessed within the theoretical concept of the Subaltern Realism perspective. Using this information, with the information from the correspondence and supported by analysis from the academic literature, it is possible to gain an insight into the role of each group in helping to develop policy, assessing the overall influences of both and stressing that currently, the conservative base has the majority of the influence in the Saudi government.

The perspective, as stated earlier in this work, focuses on the desire of developing nations such as Saudi Arabia to establish themselves as legitimate political entities. They are also currently in the midst of the transition process, but this is dominated by conflict over the key issues of religion, ethnicity, language, and authority relations that are fragmented within these countries. In this manner, the internal challenges are as important as those that stem from the international system. First, it is important to provide context to the correspondence. Although the analysis used information from the two major groups in Saudi Arabia, this is not to say that all the members of each group see the situation the same way.

There are many sub-divisions within each group on the Arab-Israeli conflict and different levels of thought towards how the situation should be dealt with. It is apparent that both groups have some form of influence within the government. To support this claim, a study by Doran in 2004, shortly after 9/11, expressed the view that ‘Saudi Arabia is in the throes of a crisis, but its elite are bitterly divided on how to escape it’.506 This viewpoint expresses the key divisions that exist within the Saudi government and the elite in society and helps to reflect the division between the two groups as noted by the correspondence data gathered in this study.

This should be reflected through the fragmented nature of the Saudi Royal Family. A brief discussion of the Royal Family highlights that there are conservative and liberal tendencies among the members. Some members of the Royal Family are keen advocates of conservative policies. One of the most famous was Prince Nayef (who recently passed away), who was well known for his stands as radical Islamist and anti-Western views. Prince Nayef controlled the press and penalised a great number of citizens for their liberal and Western views507. On the other side, several members of the Royal Family support liberal views such as Prince Al Waleed bin Tala. Al Waleed is well known internationally as a successful investor and the shareholder of different companies and

networks such as Fox News, Twitter and Apple. Internally, the prince has established his own foundation the Kingdom Holding Company, or as he calls it ‘a kingdom inside the kingdom’. Unlike other companies in Saudi, women and men can work under one roof. Furthermore, the prince is well known for his support of Women Rights, as he employed the first Saudi female pilot and stated ‘If women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia I will make them fly’.

King Abdullah (the current King), when was a Crown Prince has led a ‘camp of liberal reformers seeking rapprochement with the West’. In 2009 the King has established a new University (King Abdullah University of Sciences and Technology), which is the first educational organisation to allow mixed-gender in Saudi. Also, women are permitted to work freely (without Veils) and to drive in campus. The display of tension and the difference of opinion within the Royal Family is a microcosm of wider society.

From the correspondence, the liberals supported modernisation, freedom, and peace. This included a peace for the Arab-Israeli conflict and establishing full relations with the State of Israel. This view could be considered as an extremist view in Saudi politics, given the conservative approach that generally holds sway in government. The discussions with the participants indicated that the conservative group holds the vast amount of influence in government, although occasionally the King offers a hint of modernisation. However, the continued consultation with the religious leadership suggests that the conservative and traditional views are the most influential. The domestic influences are important, and this can be witnessed with the fact that the decision-making tends to go with the majority.

This argument through the correspondence on the differences between the liberals and conservatives and their views on how society should develop, is supported by the literature who stress that within the Royal Family, there has been division on the same issue for years. As discussed above, the situation between Nayef and Abdullah was perhaps the main example of this. A study by Weston acknowledged that in 2004, a liberal group in Saudi society presented a petition to the government stating that the country should become a constitutional monarchy within three years. Nayef reacted angrily to this, and this led to ‘the police arresting thirteen of the men . . . ten were subsequently released but three men refused to not present any more petitions to the media and remained in prison’. This indicates that the control of conservatives such as Nayef helps to prevent the liberalisation of the country.

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509 Ibid.
However, the power struggle developed when Abdullah came to throne later that year and on ‘August 8, after just one week on the throne, Abdullah freed the three dissidents, although their passports remains withdrew.\textsuperscript{512} It is important to consider the disagreements and tensions within the Royal Family. With Abdullah now as king, it is much more likely that liberals will make gains, but due to the strong support for the conservative cause and action, these changes may be severely limited, as the above example showed, there are few individuals remained held in custody without a trial for their actions over the petition. However, the division over internal policies is not necessarily the case with foreign policy concerning Israel, and this is because of the external relationship with the United States. In this manner, it is impossible to separate a discussion regarding internal and external factors as they are both intertwined in the development of Saudi foreign policy.

Summary

This analysis has helped to assess the impact that domestic groups have by using both an academic and a primary source assessment of the situation. The work has used correspondence from individuals within both the liberal and conservative school to discover the extent of their influence in the country. It can be concluded that the views of different Saudi schools of thought are crucial in determining Saudi foreign policy; while the conservative school is dominant, a relationship with and recognition of Israel is out of the question; if this conservative dominance was ever to shift, then the impact on foreign policy would be dramatic.

This chapter considered internal, domestic factors and how they helped to influence foreign policy. This is an important consideration and should not be overlooked. The correspondence with the liberal group stressed that since 9/11, there has been more communication between the liberals and the government and that liberal policy has begun to be listened to. This is not to suggest that liberalist thinking will heavily influence the country or that foreign policy towards Israel will change. However, both the impact of 9/11 and the Arab Spring have highlighted that the country does have a strong liberal base, even though it is still overwhelmed by conservatives.

As stated above, if any change occurred and the liberals were to gain much more influence, it would be likely that the foreign policy would shift dramatically, and this reflects the importance that internal groups have on Saudi government decision-making at the highest levels and foreign policy in the region in particular. At the current time though, the conservatives have the majority of the influence on Saudi Arabian foreign policy creation, although the extent to which this influence amounts to any physical, say in the development of policy, is relatively unknown. However, it is felt that the conservatives exact pressure on the government on the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that this does have some level of impact on the decision-making at the highest level. The complexity of the issue is increased because of the knowledge that the Royal Family is also clearly divided and

\textsuperscript{512} Ibid.
the conservative-liberal divide runs right through society, the government and the Royal Family, making the foreign policy programme divisive amongst Saudis at all levels of society.

The discussion of the importance of domestic factors, coupled with the findings from the previous chapter are now used in the next chapter to analyse the theoretical International Relations perspective of Subaltern Realism to see how useful this approach is in explaining the development of Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Chapter 5 focuses on placing the findings of the analysis on the influence of internal groups in Saudi Arabia, using the liberals, conservatives, and the Royal Family as the major groups of reference and aims to analyse the conflict and the foreign policy through a Subaltern realist lens. The completion of this next chapter will allow comprehensive understanding of the subject at hand and will lead directly to conclusions based on the findings of this dissertation.
CHAPTER FIVE

A Narrative Analysis of Saudi Foreign Policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Examining the Extent of the Country’s Subaltern Status

Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis within the wider context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The previous chapters have presented an introduction to the topic, a critical discussion of the concept of the Subaltern Realism view of national and international politics, outlined the history and political / societal make-up of Saudi Arabia in relation to its domestic and foreign policy, focused on the influence of Western powers and regional neighbours, as well as discussed the Saudi foreign policy as a reaction to domestic influences. The main aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the historical developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict, identifying the early years of the conflict in the 20th century, up until the recent drive for peace in the 21st century following almost a century of conflict. The overview takes place with reference to Saudi Arabian foreign policy.

The chapter produces an analysis of the conflict with regard to the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, assessing it through a Subaltern realist lens. Therefore, this analysis develops the argument through an assessment and use of a direct narrative, conducting a chronological analysis of the major events that have shaped the Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Within each historical event analysis, the study outlines how contemporary domestic and external factors (internal groups and the power of allies) helped to shape the position taken by Saudi Arabia in the conflict at the time of the event. The chapter covers the historical background to the conflict, the Inter-War period, the creation of Israel, the Cold War crisis and implications, the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War and its aftermath, the 1990s and a possible turning point, the Second Intifada and the recent drive for peace.

The main aim of the chapter is to use the evidence provided from the literature on the subject of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to assess if there are signs that the country is one that is of a Subaltern status. Therefore, the coverage of the historical background to the conflict, the Inter-War period, the creation of Israel, the Cold War crisis and implications, the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War and its aftermath, the 1990s and a possible turning point, the Second Intifada and the recent drive for peace will be used to analyse how Saudi Arabia responded during these events and the influence (both external and internal) that shaped the policy. It is argued overall that the Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the period displayed signs of the country being of a Subaltern status, although this is gradually changing as we move forward in the 21st century.
**Arab-Israeli Conflict Overview**

The Arab-Israeli conflict presents a unique and fascinating case study for the investigation of Saudi Arabian foreign policy. The creation of a powerful Jewish state in the centre of the Middle East created a unique situation in which the Arab world tried to come together in unity against a mutual foe. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the situation was far more complex than for most. Saudi Arabia shares much in common with other Arab nations; it was driven by a sense of outrage at the Zionist movement, and the legitimacy with which the United Nations was to provide it. This outrage was heightened in the Arab world as Palestinian Muslims were forcibly ejected from the country, or driven out by a desperate economic and security situation. The concept of the persecution of fellow Muslims and the emergence of a powerful potential aggressor in the Middle East gave cause for the Arab nations to make their outrage known, though to a variety of degrees and through a variety of methods. Through these factors, the expected response by Saudi Arabia to the position of Israel should have been straightforward, but because of other factors (domestic and external), its position was made far more complex, hence the need for the analysis within the Subaltern Realism perspective.

The case of Saudi Arabia is unique because its foreign policy decisions with regard to Israel were tempered by a highly beneficial relationship with the United States based upon its newly discovered oil reserves. This relationship evolved from one of economic benefits to one that provided desperately needed security to Saudi Arabia as the Soviet Union attempted to drive its sphere of influence through the Middle East. Saudi Arabia perceived itself as being in imminent danger of succumbing to such an attempt if it did not have the support of an economically and militarily powerful ally with the same desire for Saudi Arabia to remain a sovereign state as the Saudi Arabians themselves. This reliance on the United States throughout the period is perhaps the major factor that helps to highlight the Subaltern status of Saudi Arabia, with the country reliant on an external force to survive and shaping its foreign policy in the region and towards Israel through this dependence on the United States. In order to explore the issues which surround Saudi Arabian foreign policy decisions with regard to Israel, it is imperative to provide a detailed overview of the timeline of the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to make clear the force which the shared outrage of the Arab world held upon the creation of Israel and its subsequent military action in the region, as well as the difficult position that this put Saudi Arabia in due to conflicting interests in its foreign policy.

It is important to first highlight the implementation of the SA perspective and the internal factors that influence foreign policy making at the highest level. As one of the largest Arab nations in the Middle East and also the spiritual home of the Wahhabi faith, Saudi Arabia has a considerable regional influence, which it enjoys in connection with the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict. These internal factors were examined in the previous chapter. However, the application of Ayoob’s Subaltern realist view is appropriate. The interlinked nature between Saudi
foreign policy and the influence of both domestic groups and external pressures indicate that the Subaltern realist view is a suitable theory through which to view the Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is coupled with the influence of other more important factors such as the United States, with the assessment that Saudi Arabian foreign policy fits within the ‘Subaltern’ status due to the high level of influence attributed to foreign actors. The Saudi royal family faces unique pressure as it attempts to become an important political, economic, and social link between the west and the Arabic world, with both international allies and domestic groups forcing a fine balance between tradition and modernisation. This translates to the Arab-Israeli conflict through the need to appear in support of Palestine but also seeking a peace that will harmonise the region without risking the wrath of religious extremists and political Islamists in the Kingdom.

**Historical Background to the Conflict**

The major focus of this analysis is on the modern day events that have shaped foreign policy, but it is necessary to provide a narrative that underlines the development of the Arab-Israeli question and how the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia has shifted through the 20th and 21st centuries because of influence from domestic and external factors. Through this historical analysis, the researcher is able to analyse the information and collated data to assess the level of Subaltern status that should be attributed to the Saudi Arabian foreign policy that has been developed throughout the past seven decades regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Arab-Israeli conflict covers approximately a century of hostilities, despite the fact that Israel has existed as a nation-state for only half that time. The roots of the conflict lie in the history of the modern state of Israel. In the late 19th century, there was a movement amongst young Jewish members of the global Diaspora that led, in some quarters, to a rejection of Diaspora life and a collective will to restore the historic Jewish homeland of the state of Israel. This was the beginning of the Zionist movement in its modern incarnation. One of the more succinct summaries of the causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict came from Avi Shlaim, the noted Israeli historian. He has argued that ‘the origins of the conflict go back to the end of the nineteenth century when the Zionist movement conceived the idea of building a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.’ While this is not the place for a detailed discussion of the history of the modern state of Israel, the link between the formation of Israel, together with its endorsement by Western powers, and the escalation of tensions in the Middle East cannot be overstated.

The instability in the region was initiated by the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, a fall that had its routes in the Arab Revolt fomented by the Sherif Hussein ibn Ali (prior leader of Hejaz region

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including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina). The Arab Revolt was supported by the Great Powers, who agreed to the securing of a unified Arab state in the post-war division of the Middle East. Contrary to this understanding, the Franco-British Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 left the Arabs without a unified state of the scale they had envisaged. Perhaps more seriously, the Middle East was divided in such a way as to create long-standing instability and discontent. This discontent at the Western betrayal of their former allies in the Arab world was both refocused and intensified over the issue of Israel. The fact that first the United Kingdom, and later the United States, provided official support – in political, economic and military terms – to the Israeli state must be recognised as crucial for the survival of Israel in the undeniably hostile surroundings within which it is positioned. Furthermore, in consideration of the Subaltern realist perspective, the central involvement of the US on the side of Israel should be viewed as a critical factor from the very beginning, and particularly following the development of the close diplomatic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US. The role of the United States and the need to pay heed to the country because of its role in oil development are the major factors in the early development of Saudi foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. As will be seen later, the security offered by the US is another factor that has influenced the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, introducing the belief that Saudi Arabia could be understood as Subaltern in the development of its foreign policy. Ayoob’s analysis originally focused on enhancing the concept of Subaltern status by emphasising the nature of developing countries, their postcolonial history and structure as well as their desire to modernise and develop. Through this, it underlines the key external and internal factors that give a country’s foreign policy its Subaltern quality. Therefore, the role of the US (as Saudi Arabia’s main supporter and backer during the period under analysis) helps to represent how the external factors are a vital part of the Subaltern status that is held by Saudi Arabia. In essence, Ayoob is attempting to adapt the historical concept of Realism to the realities of developing states living in a postcolonial world, and this is the context within which the analysis of the external and internal factors must be analysed in this chapter.

The official endorsement began in November 1917, when the British Government decreed its support for ‘the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.’ Further to this, it was added that the British Government would ‘use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.’ Whilst this was initially received without protest through the Middle East, within a year the situation had been reversed and Palestinian leaders and their supporters were voicing their discontent and

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517 Ibid.
reinforcing their support for Emir Faisal Ibn Hussein, the military leader of the Arabs during the Arab Revolt.\textsuperscript{518}

The sense of betrayal felt by the Arabs was only reinforced when Faisal himself signed an agreement with Dr Chaim Weizmann, one of the influential leaders of the Zionist movement. This agreement declared Faisal’s support for the November 1917 British endorsement of a national home for the Jewish people, and a further guarantee of his assistance in carrying out this declaration as best he could. Under heavy pressure from his own officers, Faisal was forced to renege upon this agreement within days. His reversal of position and expression of nationalist support for the Arab state at the expense of a Jewish homeland was repaid on 8 March 1920, when he was crowned King Faisal I of Greater Syria – a state including Palestine in its natural boundaries. With his kingdom clearly defined, the proud monarch made clear to both his supporters and his former sponsors in the West that he would not tolerate the reduction of his kingdom at the bidding of the increasingly influential Zionist movement. Just months after he was crowned, the League of Nations gave France the mandate for Syria, resulting in the April 1920 Franco-Syrian war and, the France’s victory, Faisal’s expulsion from Syria. In the same year, and in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 Great Britain was given the mandate for Palestine, an area deeming to extend west and east of the River Jordan. This area was much larger than that of the historic Palestine and was much larger than the area being demanded by the Zionist movement.

The changes that took place through the unilateral divisions created instant tension in the region. Abdullah I bin al-Hussein, brother of Faisal, marched to Transjordan with the aim of entering Damascus, removing the French and reinstating a Hashemite monarchy. Churchill intervened and offered Abdullah a protectorate, which later become the state of Transjordan. This protectorate was formed from the area of Palestine east of the river Jordan, with Palestine now limited to the area to the west of it. These divisions concluded the immediate post-World War I redefining of borders and creation of protectorate and new states in the Middle-East, leaving a rather different map, a variety of shifts in political power and the set-up for almost a century of fighting, discontent and a combination of highly offensive and defensive foreign policy by every Middle-Eastern state. This period is important because it highlights how the western powers used their influence and power to help create tension in the region. Although the state of Saudi Arabia was not yet official, with the foundation of the country occurring in 1933, it is evident that the future development of the country would be impacted by the actions of the western powers, hence its inclusion in this discussion. This underlines the theme of Saudi Arabia being a Subaltern nation, with the country being subordinated to the interests of powerful and colonial nations. Interestingly, although Saudi Arabia has now become an oil-rich country, this wealth seems to mask the fact that it is still Subaltern to a certain extent, a fact that will be analysed in the future.

Inter-War Period

The inter-war relations between the British, Arabs, and Jews were characterised by increasing animosity, as promises given by the British during World War I were universally broken. By 1920 there were some 40,000 Jews settled in Palestine. Already, in Syria, still under French-authority, pan-Arab nationalists were calling for the ‘liberation’ of Palestine. From the 1920s, relations between Zionist leaders and the British worsened, with Zionists calling for unlimited immigration and calling for greater representation of the Zionists in the Palestinian administration, at the expense of Arab representation.

Local Arab resentment to mass Jewish immigration began manifesting itself in fighting between Arab militias formed of armed peasant groups and Jewish immigrants. The Arab Revolt in 1936 only highlighted to the British that they had been losing control of their mandate over Palestine, and that they could please no party involved. This resulted in the formation of Jewish volunteer defence force, serving to escalate tensions. These tensions overflowed during the Nabi Musa spring festival. Around 70,000 Arabs congregated in Jerusalem and, fuelled by anti-Zionist rhetoric, violence soon broke out, resulting in deaths on both sides and hundreds of injuries. This was to form a pattern of aggression that remains today.

Tensions between the British and Jews reached a low point when the British published the White Paper of 1939, which put a cap on Jewish immigration into Palestine, and foresaw an independent Palestinian State with Jews comprising no more than a third of the population. In one concession to the Jews, the White Paper declared that there could be a Jewish National Home within the independent Palestine. As could be expected, neither Palestinians nor the Jewish residents of the area accepted the policy: Palestinians were outraged by the allowance of continued Jewish immigration, and the Zionists declared that this represented a complete reversal in policy from the Balfour Doctrine twenty years earlier. From this point onward, owing in large part to British mismanagement and mishandling of its mandate, both Arab and Zionist groups became increasingly more militant toward each other and in their demands for freedom. The inter-war period underlines that the western influence in the region was high, particularly for newly created states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, from a Subaltern Realism perspective, it is clear that during this early period, the foreign policy was influenced by external factors that underline the Subaltern nature of Saudi Arabia and its development. Moreover, because of the Arab resentment towards the Jewish state of Israel, it becomes evident that even at this early state, the Saudi Arabian position was made complex between domestic anger towards Israel and the need to placate western powers. The inter-war period and the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia was interrupted by the Second World War.

though, and this means that the majority of this analysis takes place after the end of World War Two and in the modern era

Creation of Israel

The further influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, caused by the rise of Nazism in Europe and the ethnic cleansing campaigns of German forces during the Second World War, meant that Jews represented a staggering 33% of the population of Palestine.\textsuperscript{520} On November 29, 1947, the newly formed United Nations approved the UN Partition Plan (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181). This plan proposed to divide the country into two states, an Arab and a Jewish state, with Jerusalem designated an ‘international city’ and administered by the UN. Whilst this was accepted by leaders of both the militants and moderates in the Zionist movement, the Arab League, of which Saudi Arabia was a key member, along with the Arab Higher Committee, rejected the proposal. This rejection by Saudi Arabia perhaps highlights the underlying viewpoint of the country towards the position of Israel in the region. This is an important point to consider given the internal and external factors that have meant that the Saudi position has shifted considerably throughout the years since. Here the Saudi Arabian position was against the position of Israel and this was highlighted in an overt manner through the rejection of the proposal. This decision to reject the proposal seemingly undermines the argument that the country should be considered as Subaltern, because it went against the wishes of its strongest ally, the United States. It might be taken to suggest that the position of Saudi Arabia was not that of a Subaltern State but one that can make its own choices regarding foreign policy. However, it also could be read as the exception that proves the rule, reflecting the overall Subaltern qualities and tendencies displayed by the Saudi government.

Following the rejection by the Arab League, there were a series of attacks by Arabs against Jewish targets, with the tacit support of the Arab League. Once again, this indicates that Saudi Arabia’s official stance towards Israel was one that rejected their position and through the attacks by Arabs, it can be assumed that there was internal support for this action. When the British withdrew in 1948, owing to their own weakened state following the Second World War, the territory was left in the hands of the militant Zionist and Arab groups, who, by this point, had acquired weapons and had been trained on combat. The British withdrawal triggered a civil war in Palestine and the collapse of the Palestinian economy. As the Jewish community shifted from an initially defensive to an offensive stance a quarter of a million Palestinian Arabs were ejected from the country, with the majority flooding into Transjordan.

The Zionists, armed and sensing an opportunity, moved in to claim the land they believed was awarded to them by the UN Partition Plan. Following a violent six weeks of fighting between April and May 1948, Zionist leaders, on May 14, held enough territory to declare an independent State of Israel. The response from a large number of Arab states, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq was immediate and militant: this initiated the first Arab-Israeli War. These forces were bolstered by the arrival of troops from Sudan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The fighting lasted for approximately a year, after which followed UN-imposed truce. Shortly thereafter however, a second Arab-Israeli war began and ended in the Arab armies’ defeat. By this point, however, Israeli forces had greatly expanded their territory. When analysed within the Subaltern Realism perspective, it is clear that Saudi Arabia was heavily influenced by other countries in the region during this war, following the lead of the other Arab nations and gaining popular support in the country because of this action.\textsuperscript{521,522} The Subaltern nature of the position taken by Saudi Arabia is emphasised by the desire of the country to appear united with the other Arab states, despite its ties to western nations. This is a key issue that has dictated Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict during the past seventy years.

The end result of these two short wars was lasting and proved intractable. The first problem that emerged was the refugee problem: hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs had fled their homes and were now refugee residents of the neighbouring states, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq. The second problem was that a new state had been created in the midst of other states that did not want it to be there. This did not only extend to the states that Israel now shared new borders with, but the entire region was angered—Saudi Arabia included. Thus the creation of Israel shifted the conflict from being a local one contained within the borders of the Palestine Mandate, between the British, Palestinians, and Zionist Jews, to an interstate conflict involving the newly created Israel and all of its Arab neighbours. As time went on, the conflict would take on increasingly international characteristics as external players entered the fold. This external involvement, as will be described, influenced Saudi Arabian foreign policy toward the conflict in a significant manner. Therefore, as an overview, the historical introduction of Israel into the region is one that was conducted in an aggressive manner (from the viewpoint of the Arab nations) and this created a long-lasting anger and hatred towards Israelis, in all Arab countries including Saudi Arabia.

\textit{Saudi foreign policy in relation to the formation of the Israeli Nation-State}

This section analyses the initial Saudi foreign policy towards Israel and its formation, utilising the Subaltern Realism perspective to help assess its true nature. The importance of religion in Saudi Arabia has been underlined by numerous commentators. Anthony, for example, has noted that ‘the religious heritage of the Saudi people is a

\textsuperscript{521} M Bowen. \textit{The History of Saudi Arabia}. (California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008).

\textsuperscript{522} Ibid, p.7.
major determinant of the kingdom’s foreign policy. In this manner, it is clear that Islam plays a very big role in the development of social attitudes and government policy in Saudi Arabia, with the Qur’an being the closest thing that it has to a constitution, and sharia law underpinning the national juridical framework.

Although there is no overt theory of International Relations or foreign policy in the Qur’an, it can be said that there exists an Islamic view of the international system. Saudi Arabia subscribes to the Islamic concept of Jihad, which is a historical term and mentioned in Qur’an in contexts addressing times of war. It has restricted action according to certain conditions and declared exclusively by the Islamic leader, but unfortunately several Islamic activists have misinterpreted the term to serve their own interests and have manipulated it until it has reached the present controversial state of meaning. In the early Islamic periods, Arabs and Muslims shared a life with people from different ethnicities and religions in peace and have not been forced to adopt the religion of Islam. The overriding and correct reading of the Qur’an is that Muslims should only resort to military force against other military powers but should never harm the innocent. In addition, they should never attack without exhausting all peaceful measures first and it is deemed important to send messengers to negotiate with other opponents before attack, giving them the time to be prepared for an expected war. The values in Islam condemn any inhumane and unjustified actions of force as terrorism, which is an evil ironically covered with the label of Islam. And therefore, this can be found in the Saudi foreign policy since the early period of the Arab-Israeli conflict is characterised by this dedication to Islamic tradition and simultaneous conservatism in regional affairs.

There are specific constants that underline Saudi Arabian foreign policy and help to highlight why this is such a complex subject. These include the emphasis on the primacy of Islam, regional conservatism and an inclination for self-preservation, and a developing alliance with the West, especially the United States. These are characteristics of Saudi foreign policy that have remained firm through the 20th and 21st centuries, and it is possible to view the policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, when considering these factors. The conflict that emerges internally for the Saudi Arabian government is this need to remain true to its Islamic roots (especially concerning the outline of the region), while balancing it with the increasing link to the west, through its ties with the United States. Without this link, it is thought that Saudi Arabian policy would be far more aggressive and outspoken towards the position of Israel, highlighting that the country is heavily influenced by external factors, a key part of the Subaltern Realism framework. The framework outlines that countries such as Saudi Arabia are dominated and dictated to in terms of their foreign policy, because of the need to please and toe the line of the policy of more dominant foreign actors, as can be seen with Saudi Arabia and the influence of the United States.

Saudi Arabia, though now a major regional power owing to its oil wealth and substantial economic might, was relatively slow to realise its power and influence among the Arab states. Indeed, Korany and Fattah argue that early Saudi foreign policy in the region was highly conservative: the Saudi kingdom exhibited no inclination to either extend its influence or become involved in matters outside of the Gulf. This initial reluctance to become involved in matters outside of the Saudi borders could be argued as a possible Subaltern tendency, with the aim of not upsetting its allies, the major focus of foreign policy, rather than taking an active part in the region’s stability and overall development. This helps to explain the relative dearth of early Saudi foreign policy in relation to the creation of Israel—there was no genuine interest or care, until a threat materialised.\(^{526}\) Korany and Fattah may be right by about Saudi Arabia inclining to extend their influence and involvement in the matters outside the Gulf region, but not because they had no genuine interest or care as they claim, but because during the early period of the second Saudi state of King Abdulaziz, the Kingdom was still unstable and regional security was still unachieved, therefore the Kingdom was in no position to get involved in international matters until it has assured its regional security. This underlines that the internal factors were a crucial part of the early development (or lack of) of direct foreign policy towards Israel, partly because the internal factors in the country (political instability) impacted heavily on the government’s ability to rule effectively. In addition, it has no substantial military or material wealth as oil, to start taking a step further in the international arena, which is the ground of any state’s outset in extending and imposing influence internationally. Therefore, the Kingdom has only started to be involved in the conflict after it has organised its own regional security and material efficiency.

Up until 1945, Saudi Arabia had remained quiet on the issue of a Jewish influx into the Middle East and there is little evidence of an official proclamation from the Saudi royal family on the Zionist problem. However, with the 1945 re-establishment of the Arab Higher Committee in response to increasing concerns across the Arab world about Jewish Nationalism in Palestine, there was movement towards official condemnation of Zionism and the threat of military action against the Jews in Palestine.\(^{527}\) On December 2, 1945, the Arab League announced an official boycott of any Jewish-run business in Palestine, announcing and demanding that all Arab businesses and individuals were to adhere to this boycott.\(^{528}\) The Arab League by no means represented a unified Arab world at this point, indeed the Arab Higher Committee, which it had established in the November 1945 in order to act as ruling body of the Palestinian Arabs, had collapsed within weeks due to internal conflict. However, as one of only seven founding member states, along with Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan and Yemen, Saudi Arabia’s support for the initial boycott as a first unified action of Arab nations against perceived acts of aggression by Zionists in Palestine represented a first tangible step in adapting Saudi Arabian foreign policy to the newly


empowered and shifting issue of Zionism in the Middle East.

The infighting in the region continued to take place over the next few decades. However, the Arab League remained unified in stance against the Jews as an occupying power in Palestine. The actions of the Arab League over the coming years then, are a sound representation of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia with relation to the issue of Zionism and the formation of Israel up to the point when Saudi Arabian foreign policy developed its own subtleties in its dealing with the issue of Israel – something that did not occur in the immediate aftermath of the formation of Israel. As mentioned above, the immediate response of the Arab League to Israel’s declaration of independence was to engage each state’s military. While Egypt sent a force of 40,000 soldiers, Iraq sent around 18,000 and Syria 12,000, Saudi Arabia sent around 3,000 men. Historians remain divided on the reason for sending such a small force. Whilst it is not possible to find accurate figures on the size of the Saudi Arabian army at this time (though it was certain that the population in Saudi Arabia was comparatively smaller than its neighbours), it is certain that a country that was able to deploy over 20,000 troops in Jordan less than 20 years later would have had an army many times the size of the force it sent to fight Israel. While Egypt sent as many troops as were operational at that time and Iraq sent three quarters of its army, Saudi Arabia was vastly more reserved – indeed, no Saudi Arabian troops took an active part in hostilities. This has been attributed to poor transport infrastructure; the troops did not reach the battlefield. This, perhaps, set a pattern to which it remains faithful today, of a more moderate approach to the issue of Israel than many of its Arab neighbours.

Thus the foreign policy activism in relation to the formation of the state of Israel was comparatively quiet, especially when examined against how it would shift and change in the coming decades. Lack of involvement was owing to constant disorganisation among the Arab states and within their Alliance, but also because the conservative Saudi state perceived no benefit from involving itself—while the other, more radical Arab states, such as Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, were gearing up for a wave of nationalism, Saudi Arabia stayed on the side lines. That is not to say that Saudi Arabia implicitly accepted the creation of an ‘enemy in its midst’. After all, Israel was comparatively close geographically to Saudi borders. But at a time when Saudi policy was mostly inward-focused and concentrating on expanding its own resources and external alliances, there was perceived to be no need to risk involvement in the morass developing in the north-west of the region.

Cold War Crisis and Implications

Influence of the United States upon Saudi foreign policy towards Israel.

The influence of the United States upon Saudi foreign policy, particularly with relation to its official view of Israel, is one of great importance. Under the leadership of Truman, the United States was the first nation to give de facto recognition to Israel, immediately after Israel’s own declaration of independence.531 Just two years later, the United States, together with France and Great Britain, signed the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, pledging to take action either as members or independently of, the United Nations in order to maintain the security of Israeli sovereignty. The position of Israel in the Middle East has been strengthened by this support from western powers, and has also impacted the way that Saudi Arabia has approached the problem since the creation of Israel.

Almost in line with this move by the United States to support Israel was a shift to foster Arab independence in such a way as to avoid the expansion of the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence and, in particular, to secure friendly relations with oil producing nations. The concept of oil is a feature that has complicated the nature of the foreign policy followed by Saudi Arabia in the years since its discovery. Oil was first discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1938, and by the early 1940s the true extent of the nation’s vast oil reserves was known.532 Politically powerful petroleum companies from the United States that had been given contracts to develop these oil fields swiftly put pressure upon the United States government to take a leading role in ensuring sustained political stability and security in the Arabian Peninsula. Yielding under this pressure and recognising the economic potential of ensuring both stability and a mutually beneficial relationship with Saudi Arabia, Franklin D Roosevelt made a 1943 declaration that the United States was deeply concerned with the defence of Saudi Arabia.533 This declaration took physical form in the United States providing training to the Saudi Army and Air Force and the construction of the airfield at Dhahran by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Over subsequent years Saudi rulers would meet with their counterparts from Washington, cementing a long lasting ‘special relationship’. The creation of this special relationship and the support that the United States has given Saudi Arabia also helps to reflect why the development of a foreign policy that argues against Israeli territory in the region is not necessarily possible and why the country has struggled to present full support to either the Arab world or the United States in the past half century.

This relationship has been strained at times, particularly in regard to Israel. As mentioned, Israel is a very privileged ally of the West, especially the United States, and has been so since its creation. The developing

economic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States drew those two countries closer together. The common denominator between Israel and Saudi Arabia—having a common ally—did not mean that the two would be friends. It is for this reason of mutual alliance that ‘Saudi Arabia and Israel end up being objectively in the same camp’. In direct reaction to this lumping together with Israel, as occurred in the eyes of Saudi Arabia’s other Arab neighbour states, Saudi policy makers were keen to point out the association between Zionism and socialism, and the backing that Israel initially received from Communist parties. In this way Saudi Arabia was able to distance itself from being automatically seen as an ally to Israel because the two enjoyed close relations with the United States.

The unwanted tie to Israel via the United States was significant—Riyadh was accused by many Arab neighbour states as helping Israel indirectly: oil was flowing into the United States, and military aid was flowing from there to Israel. Thus it always remained policy to denounce Israel, but it did so in different ways from its neighbours, as will be elucidated below. The relationship with the United States has always benefited Saudi Arabia economically and militarily, though exposed it to too much regional criticism and attack. This, in part, influenced Saudi Arabia to step up to a clearer leadership role in the 1960s. Furthermore, the internal threats faced by the ruling family have impacted foreign policy for the majority of the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Prior to the outspoken religious leaders of the 1990s condemning government links to the US and the allowing of their troops on Saudi territory, the royal family suffered its greatest challenge in 1979. This threat came through ‘Juhayman al-Utaybi’s occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca on 20 November 1970 . . . the rebel’s justification was that the royal family had lost its legitimacy through corruption and blind imitation of the West’. These challenges faced by the royal family signify that there is a great need to balance between liberal and traditional beliefs when focusing on foreign policy. The attempted uprising by Utaybi, coupled with the outspoken nature of the religious leaders in society, indicates that the royal family face threats from within in terms of their relationships with the US, Israel, and the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Subaltern realist view posits the linkage between domestic and external variables to explain the nexus between intrastate and interstate conflicts. It does so by highlighting the intertwining of the state-making enterprise with regional balance of power issues. As will be highlighted below, the Saudi Arabian foreign policy decisions made by the government are under pressure from both radical elements of the religious leadership and liberals for different reasons. As mentioned above, ‘the dependence of Saudi Arabia on foreign help to protect it caused bitter questions, both among the conservatives and the liberal new elites. There are reasons for this and

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535 Ibid. p.89.
expresses the view that the country has been placed in a Subaltern position by nations such as the United States. Despite the 200 billion dollars spent by the government on defence since about 1970, the Saudi armed forces still remained only about 58,000 strong and totally incapable of defending the Kingdom. This view has led to the belief developed by the conservatives that Saudi Arabia and the US have entered into a strategic partnership that aims to consolidate the Kingdom’s position in the region with scant regard for the domestic attitudes that exist. This viewpoint highlights that Saudi Arabia is influenced heavily by the US, due to the security that the more powerful country provides the Kingdom with, underlining the nature of the Subaltern position that Saudi Arabia finds itself in. Therefore, the military decision-making taken by the government, which extends to the foreign policy concerning Palestine and Israel, has been criticised by both sides in the debate. Moreover, it appears that there is concern that the presence of the US troops in the Kingdom is a sign that the government is not able to make its own foreign policy decisions but relies too heavily on the support of the US and is therefore forced to play the role of regional ally in situations such as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Saudi Arabian policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is complex and has changed considerably with the growing influence of the US as an ally. The main policy of the government in the past has been driven by the need to address Palestinian concerns, and it is clear that ‘since the 1940s, Saudi-US relations have been challenged repeatedly by stark differences of opinion over the Israeli-Palestinian question...nevertheless, Saudi Arabia generally has supported US policy since the early 1990s by endorsing Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements’. Here, Blanchard argues that the Saudi policy has gradually changed to become one of a more US-dominated stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict, reflecting the power that the US holds over the Kingdom, and this has led to the concerns of the religious leadership.

The Soviet threat to Saudi Arabia and its implication for the Saudi stance towards Israel

The development of the Cold War and the encroaching position of the Soviet Union saw the positive relationship with the US increase, but these also confused matters in terms of the official position towards Israel. This relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Americans deepened during the Cold War, with both the United States and the Soviet Union becoming highly concerned about the upcoming proxy battle and attempts to retain influence throughout the Middle East. In terms of policymaking, this put the Saudi Arabians in a difficult position. The key to resisting inclusion into the expanding Soviet sphere of influence was clearly the maintenance of a friendly relationship with the United States, which was willing to pour vast resources into the protection of this oil-rich country. However, Saudi Arabia did not wish to go so far as aligning itself with the United States in terms of

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538 Ibid.
foreign policy on Israel. Therefore, the Cold War period was one that required a fine management of the foreign policy, so as to not lose support from the US and open the country to influence by the Soviet Union, while also needing to reject Israel publicly to ensure the support of the Arab world.

With this problematic situation, the Saudi Arabians saw little choice other than to prioritise the threat to their domestic security – in the form of Soviet expansion – over what essentially resolved itself to an issue of foreign policy. Soviet expansion in the region took the form of supporting secular, socialist Arab nationalism, which threatened to destabilise the Saudi regime.\(^{541}\) The consequence of this in terms of the official position on Israel was one of official condemnation and a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the state, supported by the continuing boycott against Israeli goods, but failing to go so far as threatening military action against a state with which they had an extremely important mutual ally. This is not to suggest that the issue of Israel was not to strain Saudi Arabian-American relations. Given the pariah status which was bestowed upon Egypt by the rest of the Arab world following its 1979 peace treaty and official recognition of Israel, the refusal of Saudi Arabia to extend diplomatic recognition to Israel must be seen as a prudent one. However, the balancing act of appeasing the United States while retaining a sufficiently hard line on the issue of Israel was to prove one which would plague Saudi Arabian foreign policy over the coming decades.

However, at the end of the Cold War, fears of potential Soviet-aided assaults receded, and Saudi Arabia’s defender, the US, emerged as the sole superpower in a unipolar system. This did not improve Riyadh’s bargaining position. With its economy steadily maturing and stature within the Arab/Muslim world demanding displays of effective leadership, Saudi Arabia apparently suffered from diplomatic schizophrenia. Riyadh became increasingly vocal in demanding Israeli compliance with relevant UN resolutions and liberally funded Palestinian organisations while maintaining strategic collaboration with Washington. This was particularly apparent during the First Gulf War. Insecurity drove Riyadh to accepting the deployment of a large US-led force for Kuwait’s liberation from Iraqi occupation.\(^ {542}\) US-Saudi collaboration, crucial to the restoration of regional security, determined policy options available to Riyadh, including those regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unable to defend itself, Riyadh remained dependent on US security assurances for its very survival. This, naturally, telescoped the range of its options beyond the framework of US preferences.\(^ {543}\) Here, it is apparent that Saudi Arabia could not defend itself adequately, thereby underlining the Subaltern status that the country has cultivated through its reliance on powerful backers such as the United States.


The Six-Day war and Saudi Arabian foreign policy reactions

One of the most important events over the past half-century was that of the Six-Day War in 1967. Saudi Arabia was reluctant to become militarily involved in the Six-Day War of 1967, in a move that can be interpreted as seeking to continue to court the diplomatic friendship with the United States as a domestic security measure. This is a central theme in this assessment and the consideration of the US and how it would view Saudi Arabian policy seems to dominate the majority of the country's thinking at the foreign policy level. This is a key feature of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy throughout the period, indicating the importance of the external factors when viewing the situation from the Subaltern Realism perspective. This reluctance to become involved in fear of upsetting powerful allies seems to emphasise the Subaltern status of Saudi Arabia at this point in its history. The position of the country in the postcolonial world and its lack of development (particularly militarily) had left it open to influence by the US and this could be argued as the major reason for its noncommittal stance in the war initially, underling the Subaltern tendencies that existed in the development of Saudi foreign policy. After the Arab forces suffered unexpectedly heavy losses during the first day of fighting, Saudi Arabia provided an undisclosed number of aircraft for the use of the Arab forces – a move mirrored by Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Kuwait - but restricted its involvement to just this loan. Despite the lack of military involvement, Saudi Arabia took the opportunity to put aside differences with Egypt that had arisen over Yemen and Egyptian support for a republican government there. Subsequent to the Six-Day War, the Saudi Arabian government announced annual subsidies to Egypt, Jordan and Syria to support their damaged economies. The aftermath of the Six-Day War saw an increasing sense of paranoia in Saudi Arabian quarters that Israel was seeking to undermine the Saudi Arabian relationship with the United States. This view seemed to be validated by periodic cancellations of United States arms sales to Saudi Arabia during the 1970s and 1980s. These cancellations were the result of congressional concern that the Saudi Arabians might use the arms in acts of military aggression against Israel. Concern about the weakening of the relationship with the United States did not result in a softening of Saudi Arabian foreign policy with regard to Israel. However, several assurances were issued from the kingdom to the effect that longstanding deals for weapons from United States contractors were necessary for strictly defensive purposes. Whilst this was clearly aimed at being interpreted as an assurance that Saudi Arabia had no intention of attacking Israel, the message was suitably veiled so as to prevent a backlash from the Arab world.

Saudi Arabia’s reaction to the declaration of a state of Israel was strong, and remained so in the coming years as more wars were fought between Israel and its immediate neighbours. Adeed Dawisha has pointed to one war in particular as a ‘seminal event in the post-war history of the Middle East’—the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. This

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war in particular was a hugely determinative event because it changed and redefined the power relationships in the region. All of the Arab states had previously underestimated the strength and power of the Israeli military machine, and have now recognised that there was a very powerful enemy in their midst. ‘No longer could the Arabs conduct their own inter-relationships without taking into consideration the Jewish state which, in six days, had single-handedly wrested the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights from Jordan, Egypt, and Syria respectively.’

Within the Arab world, the defeat was twofold: first, because of the loss of sovereign territory of three states, and second, because of the defeat of revolutionary Arab nationalism. Thus even conservative, status quo states, such as Saudi Arabia, were still deeply affected by the turn to nationalism among many of the Arab masses. Gamal Abdul Nasir of Egypt—leader of the Arab nationalist movement—often criticised conservative leaders such as Kings Saud and Faisal of Saudi Arabia for their passive acceptance of Israel, arguing that this, plus alliances with the Western powers, amounted to keeping Israel alive. This represents the internal influence that impacts on government in the region, with the growing unrest towards the power of Israel seemingly creating a strong anti-Israeli position in popular society, both in Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations in the region. The alliance with the United States in particular was attacked for the Americans’ role in supporting the Israeli military. Saudi Arabia was often attacked as being dependent on the Western imperialists and Zionist allies by Nasir, thus shifting the blame from him and the nationalist states to the conservative ones. As a result Saudi leaders were forced to go on the defensive—policy during the 1950s and 1960s was characterised by fighting to retain the Saudi political and ideological order and to keep out the nationalist fervour that was spreading through the region. Saudi Arabia had to take an offensive stance in the 1950s and 1960s, when regime security was threatened. Indeed, Nasir’s defeat in 1967 was, paradoxically, both a catalyst for removing Saudi Arabia from Egypt’s pan-Arabism, and a determinative factor for placing Saudi Arabia right in the middle of the developing Arab-Israeli situation.

The Arab Summit in 1967 perhaps marks the beginning of Saudi Arabia’s deepening involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, just as it marks the end of outright antagonism between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya agreed to grant hundreds of millions of US dollars to Jordan and Egypt, to compensate them for the land lost to Israel. This halted Nasir’s attack on Saudi Arabia and let the Saudis concentrate on other regional political events. The Summit meeting in 1967 at Khartoum witnessed the adoption of yet another resolution condemning the Israeli state. It reiterated ‘the main principles by which the Arab states abide, namely, no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian

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people in their own country.'

Saudi Arabia began to play a growing role in Arab summit meetings. Saudi policy during the Khartoum Summit remained moderate. However, King Faisal insisted on attaching a moderating rider—all relations would be couched in terms to uphold mediation and negotiated settlements, and political and diplomatic efforts would be utilised to reduce or eliminate the effects of the aggression. As Saudi Arabia’s financial power was strengthening its leaders became determined to move to an offensive role in leading the moderate Arab states on matters pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This growing role helped to identify that as well as having the desire to appease the US, Saudi Arabia also wanted to display its independence and internal support for the struggles of the Arab world in the region.

The policy to support diplomatic efforts to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict was furthered when Saudi Arabia supported United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338, which called for the withdrawal by Israel of the territories it occupied in the aftermath of the 1967 war. There were, however, quiet efforts to tiptoe around the overt pledge to diplomacy and non-combative responses. Saudi Arabia contributed tens of millions of US Dollars to Palestinian guerrillas, and more than $250 million to maintain Jordan’s air defence network. One of the main factors that saw Saudi Arabia’s increased involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict was the dimension that threatened something that the Saudi state held very dear: the threat to Islam and Islamic tradition. When the dust settled after the six days of fighting and Israel now controlled Jerusalem, the third holiest city in the Islamic faith, Saudi Arabia could now emphasise the pan-Islamic dimension of the conflict and used this as a reason to become more involved. The Al-Aqsa Mosque—a very significant religious site for Muslims—was no longer accessible. An even more significant blow than mere Israeli occupation was its declaration of a united Jerusalem as its eternal capital. Two of Islam’s other holy cities—Mecca and Medina—are located in Saudi territory; this may have been weighing heavily on the Saudi leaders’ minds when confronted with a takeover of Jerusalem. Indeed, Bahgat has noted that King Faisal, in power at the time of the 1967 war, expressed a strong desire to revisit the Mosque when the land was restored to Muslim control. Here again we can see that a strong driver of policy was a lynchpin seen previously—a desire to emphasise the primacy of the Islamic faith.

Yom Kippur War and Aftermath

The concerns about the precarious position of Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the United States fuelled a similar policy decision to that of the Six-Day War during the 1973 Arab-Israeli, or Yom Kippur, War. Again, the focal

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point of Saudi Arabian involvement was to provide financial aid to Egypt and Syria, although this time a token force of around 200 ground troops were also provided. Contributions towards the 1973 Arab-Israeli War were complicated further by explicit Soviet support for the Arab forces, manifested in the form of thousands of tons of supplies and hundreds of T-55 and T-62 tanks. Saudi Arabia was thus highly concerned about aligning itself with Soviet forces, and therefore against the United States. Even limited Saudi Arabian involvement therefore points to concern at being ostracised from the Arab world if they failed to do so, along with genuine outrage at the expansion of Israel during the Six-Day war, and a concern that another expansion would begin to seriously destabilise an area containing both military allies and long-standing economic partners.

Aside from the continued boycott of Israeli goods and the predominantly economic support of Israel’s military opponents, Saudi Arabian foreign policy with regard to Israel frequently registered its presence in terms of policy decisions towards the United States. This is well illustrated by the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. ‘During this time, the Saudi government adopted its most militant position when it decided to use its oil against countries supportive of Israel,’ writes Anthony. Following the United States’ support for the war, Saudi Arabia pushed through a decision with the Arab members of OPEC to reduce oil production by 5% on October 17th. When President Nixon authorised a renewed arms contract with Israel, together with $2.2 billion in appropriations, just two days after OPEC’s decision, Saudi Arabia imposed an embargo against the United States - a move followed by other Arab oil exporters and resulting in the 1973 energy crisis.

This series of events clearly demonstrates that a central feature of Saudi Arabian foreign policy with regard to Israel was the exertion of economic pressure upon Israel’s primary sponsor – the United States. The oil embargo and resulting energy crisis is credited as being the single most important factor in the 1973-1974 stock market crash and contributing towards Israeli withdrawal from the west side of the Suez Canal. Following this disengagement on March 5th 1974 Saudi Arabia led the decision by Arab states to end the oil embargo, on March 17th. The financial capability suggested by the oil embargo put Saudi Arabia onto the centre stage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the embargo, decisions regarding Israel were rarely taken without consultation with Saudi Arabia. When the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement was announced in 1978, PLO representatives travelled to Riyadh for discussions with Crown Prince Fahd. Several days later the American Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, flew to Saudi Arabia in an attempt to gain Saudi support for the Camp David Accords. The Syrian President also arrived that week, and a Syrian news agency reported on the situation by saying that talks were taking place

within the framework of the wise Saudi policy which always seeks to unify Arab ranks.” The Egyptian deputy premier and an advisor to the Moroccan King Hassan flew to Geneva for talks with King Khalid, where he had been convalescing after receiving medical care there. Finally, King Hussein of Jordan went to Saudi Arabia to participate in the talks. This marked the first time in history that foreign powers had to take into serious consideration the Saudi response to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The status of the Saudi state had elevated and the legitimacy of the government in regard to its conviction and dedication to the peace process was confirmed. By this point, as Dawisha notes, ‘by the late 1970s Saudi Arabia had been fully sucked into the morass of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the country could no longer revert to the passive, peninsula-centred posture of the 1950s and 1960s.’ This was not necessarily a good thing; as will become evident, Saudi Arabia was still constrained in action by its new relations to the other Arab countries.

The Saudi Arabian government’s influence upon Israel and its position as a leader of the Arab states was compounded on August 7 1981, when Crown Prince Fahd put forward his Middle-Eastern peace proposal. This followed Saudi Arabian disengagement with the Camp David Accords, with the Saudi government stating that the resolutions proposed were unworkable and overly pro-Israeli. The details of Fahd’s plan had eight specific points including the complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied after the Six Day War, including Jerusalem; the removal of Israeli settlements established after the Six Day War, guarantees of freedom of worship and of the practice of religious rites for all faiths in the holy places; confirmation of the right of return for the Palestinian people, and promises of compensation for those who did not want to return; placing the West Bank and Gaza Strip under United Nations supervision for a transitional period; establishing an independent Palestine, with Jerusalem as the capital; confirmation of the right of the surrounding states to live in peace and guarantees by the United Nations, or certain member states, to implement these principles. This plan was adopted as the official Arab position during the Arab summit in Fez in 1982, and was to remain as such for a decade. At the Reconvened Arab Summit in Fez, the Fahd Plan, with minor amendments to clauses four, seven and eight, was accepted as conditions for Arab peace with Israel. The amendments were added to assuage the Syrians and Palestinians, and included that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation was the sole representative of the Palestinian people; that the Security Council would provide guarantees to regional security, and that the Security Council would guarantee

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implementation of the principles.\textsuperscript{559}

Wider events in the Middle East during this period, namely the Islamic Revolution in Iran were to play an influential role in shaping Saudi Arabian foreign policy with Israel over the coming years. Saudi Arabia has continued to denounce Israel occupation of territory captured in 1967 and its continued flouting of international law in its occupation of Arab land – most recently, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal referred to Israel as behaving like a ‘spoilt child’.\textsuperscript{560} However, just as Saudi Arabian concerns of soviet expansion influenced their treatment of Israel after the Second World War, fears of Iranian influence in the Middle East actually pushed Saudi Arabia closer to a position of support for Israel. There has been recent speculation that, despite a continued lack of diplomatic ties, Saudi Arabia would not object to an Israeli air-force flyover in order to attack Iran in order to disrupt the Iranian nuclear arms programme.\textsuperscript{561} This speculation comes in the context of a 2002 Saudi Arabian Arab Peace Initiative, discussed further below, which calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state in return for full diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and some other Arab countries. The adoption of this plan by the Arab League signalled the continued leadership which Saudi Arabia exerts in terms of the evolving foreign policy of Arab states with regard to Israel.

The role of the King in defining foreign policy and being influenced by both liberal and conservative groups respectively can be underlined through the 1973 oil embargo. This tension between the liberals wishing to modernise and the religious conservatives that desired the society to remain traditional and to maintain its cultural roots has existed for the second half of the twentieth century. During the 1960s and 1970s, King Faisal had to adopt a balance between conservatism and modernisation to ensure society and survival of his nation. This stance taken by Saudi Arabia underlines the nature of the Subaltern position experienced by Saudi Arabia, mainly through the key theme of the need to modernise in a society where traditionalism is still powerful. Cordesman has argued that ‘Faisal chose a middle ground between religious conservatism and modernisation. He attempted to preserve the Kingdom’s religious characters and to mitigate the adverse effects of modernisation’.\textsuperscript{562} Despite this attempt to create a balance, Faisal sided with the conservatives following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, ‘organising the Arab oil boycott that followed the war and through this embargo, led to a sudden massive increase in oil prices, Saudi wealth and Saudi political influence’.\textsuperscript{563} This example indicates that although King Faisal sought a balance between liberal influence and the religious leaders in Saudi Arabia, in foreign policy he focused on

\textsuperscript{559} Ibid. p. 685.


\textsuperscript{563} Ibid. p. 17.
preserving the economic safety of the country, and on this occasion, sided with conservatives. In other words, Faisal’s key foreign policy objects were pan-Islamism, anti-Communism, and pro-Palestinian nationalism; however, he significantly stabilised the Kingdom's bureaucracy and he gained popularity among Saudis since they consider him a brave hero for standing up to the West during the oil boycott. The action taken by King Faisal during the 1973 Arab-Israeli (Yom Kippur) War highlights one other key example of the country going against the wishes of its powerful external allies in the west. The decision taken in such a critical moment in Saudi Arabia’s history was because of the need to ensure economic stability and growth, but the wider implications were perhaps just as important. King Faisal’s decision to stand up to the Western nations during the boycott (including the United States) should be viewed as a potential watershed moment in the history of Saudi Arabia, with the country finally overcoming its Subaltern status and gaining independence of thought and action with regard to its foreign policy. However, it is also important to note that Faisal’s position on the Arab-Israeli conflict was also linked to his personal faith, perhaps more so than the factors emphasised by Subaltern Realism. The majority of the findings in this chapter help to underline the importance of key external and internal factors that influence foreign policy (part of the concept of Subaltern status for a developing nation). However, in this instance, the actions of Saudi Arabia went against the external aims of more powerful allies, thereby undermining the belief that the country is ruled primarily within a Subaltern status.

1990s – A Turning Point?

The death of King Faisal and the conclusion of the First Gulf War with Iraq helped soften Saudi attitudes toward Israel. Following the signing of the Oslo Accords and Israel’s peace settlement with the Palestinians, the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, attended some of the ceremonies while other Arab states boycotted Israel. The period from the 1990s onward were characterised by an increased support of the peace process and a diplomatic settlement, even though during this time Saudi Arabia still remained distant from Israel and did not make attempts to improve its own relations. This can be compared to the policies of other Gulf States, like Oman and Qatar, whose relations with Israel during the Oslo Accord period improved markedly. During this period as well, Saudi Arabia continued to take a strong position in relation to the return of Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty and under Islamic jurisdiction. New calls were also made for Israel to be held accountable for killing Palestinian civilians in an international war crimes tribunal.

Throughout this period Saudi Arabia remained committed to the peace process, even in spite of actions by the Palestinian and Israeli parties themselves. The Saudi Royal Family maintained its commitment to the Islamic, and greater Arab, cause, and Saudi public opinion was strongly pro-Palestinian. The ruling elite in the kingdom was

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always sensitive to this, especially if there was no threat to the state by meeting public opinion. Relations were not always smooth, however, between the Saudi leadership and Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Saudi officials seemed to harbour a strong dislike of the Palestinian Authority’s penchant for squandering international aid (including that from Saudi Arabia) and its failure to make every effort to capitalise on the peace process. The one salient factor was a greater sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian people, rather than any friendship or alliance with the Palestinian leadership.

Despite the Oslo Accords, when Binyamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister of Israel in May 1996, it soon became clear that Israel would not prioritise peace to the same extent as his predecessors, notably Yitzak Rabin and Shimon Peres. This caused Saudi Arabia to push Israel more firmly on certain aspects of the peace process it now viewed as necessary to incorporate for a just peace—namely, Israel’s unwritten policy of expanding new Jewish settlements in Jerusalem. October 1996 marked a time when Saudi Arabia openly criticised Israel in the international media—this was following the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem’s decision to open a tunnel near the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque. This outward criticism emphasises the growing confidence of Saudi Arabia as an independent power, stressing that the country may have shaken off its Subaltern status during the latter part of the period under study. In the ensuing riots, resulting in deaths for both Israelis and Palestinians, King Fahd attacked Israel for ‘practices which will not only sabotage the peace process but will greatly harm the world’s stability and prosperity…Israeli changes to the nature of the Al Aqsa which aim at suppressing the identity of Islamic holy sites are a flagrant deviation from international laws and norms.’ Further statements from King Fahd and other important Saudi leaders follow this same pattern of wishing to have the parties stick to the peace process and to a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. In a March 1997 speech, King Fahd stated: ‘Saudi Arabia is following with extreme concern the repeated acts of aggression of the Israeli authorities against the city of Jerusalem…Such actions are in defiance of all international resolutions and conventions.’ One month later, Saudi Arabia cited the stalled peace process for its refusal to attend the Middle Eastern economic summit, saying that, with ‘Jerusalem…being lost and swallowed’ it would be inappropriate to focus only on regional economics. After the international crisis with Iraq in 1997, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal criticised Israel’s policy toward the Palestinians, and expressed regret about the double standard about applying international law to one state—Iraq—but not to the other—Israel.

Further developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict toward the end of the 1990s threatened to destabilise the peace process further, and came under attack by the Saudi leadership. When Ehud Barak became Prime Minister after defeating Netanyahu in the 1999 elections, the Saudi leadership was initially optimistic that this would be a good

567 Ibid.
step for the peace process. Initial negotiations between Syria and Israel, and Israel and the Palestinians got underway with Saudi support, but when these collapsed in 2000 Saudi Arabia again blamed Israel for digging its heels and allowing this to happen. It further condemned the bleak economic situation facing the Palestinians who were confined to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Moreover, in 1980s, King Fahd has proposed the peace plan, calling for every nation within the region of the Middle East to live in a peaceful form of diplomacy. The Ulama and the majority of conservatives in the country have considered this statement as a first signal that Saudi Arabia was ready to accept and acknowledge Israel’s position in the Middle East. This reflects the view that the country’s position on foreign policy is divided, with traditionalists and supporters of the Arab world’s position against Israel fearing the involvement of the US, due to the way it has been perceived that it influences Saudi Arabian foreign policy, underlining the possible Subaltern tendencies of the country’s government in obeying the wishes of the more powerful external allies from the west. Moreover, the United States-initiated peace talks in 1991 were perceived as a key turning point by the regime in its support for Israel, even though no Saudi officials have attended the talks. Posteriorly, several ‘imams and preachers of different mosques have been arrested for challenging the government’s decisions and support for the Arab-Israeli peace talks.\textsuperscript{568} The growing unrest of radical conservatives, particularly those of the non-established Mutawa (clerics) such as the Sahwa\textsuperscript{569} that believed Saudi government was siding with the US and Israel, led to the Saudi leaders to declare that ‘the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a religious but a political debate therefore, it is possible to solve it by peaceful means’.\textsuperscript{570} The outrage caused by this statement led to retribution by the militant factions of the radical conservatives through a renewed focus on attempting to change domestic and foreign policy. It is noted that ‘at the end of 1991, the militant Ulama focused on the Saudi participation in the peace talks with Israel and the regime’s refusal to endorse a call for a jihad at the Dakar Islamic summit. Some neo-fundamentalists also attacked other Arab countries, including Syria for participating in the Arab-Israeli peace talks’.\textsuperscript{571} The divisions in Saudi Arabian society concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict are clear through this analysis. The impact of the conservatives and their attitudes towards Islamic developments in the country, which they view as extending to foreign policy in cases such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, coupled with the need for the regime to gain the support of the religious leaders and the complexities over whether to consider the conflict as one of a political or religious nature, underlines the impact that domestic groups can have on the foreign policy in the Kingdom. The Ulama have witnessed a development over the past decade due to the growth of political Islamist action and the need to confront the

\textsuperscript{569} Al Sahwa Al-Islamiyah (or Awaking Islam) is a radical Islamic movement established in 1970 and was created by scholars from Egypt and Syria, as Saudi has invited those scholars to participate in its new educational system. These academics were follower of Muslim Brotherhood and persecuted in their home countries as Baathist and Nasserist. The kingdom (at that time) were not aware of the potential threats until the group of Al Sahwa al-Islamiyya became religiously active and enthusiast with its combined concepts from Wahhabism tradition and Muslim Brotherhood approach (on political issues). This group collapsed in the1990s and its ideas are classified now as extreme terrorist by the Saudi authority.
\textsuperscript{570} Ibid. p. 199.
\textsuperscript{571} Ibid. p. 200.
monarchy over their actions on foreign policy. Even those religious leaders that preached about moderation and reform were against the Saudi decision to be involved in peace talks during the early 1990s. Alshamsi notes that ‘through 1992, the Ulama continued countering elements of the Saudi foreign policy, especially on the Palestinian problem and the Saudi position towards Israel. The Saudi government had participated in the Madrid conference for peace in the Middle East. This involvement of the Saudi Arabian government, amid signs of its growing independence, has led to claims by the religious leadership that the country’s government is becoming too dominated and influenced by its external backers, such as the US. This should be viewed as ironic, given that the growth of independence came about because of the reduction of influence of the US on the government but it is clear that there is still some element of the Subaltern status that governs the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. In terms of the peace process, the Ulama leadership opposed the conference and its results, delivering critical lectures about the issue of peace with Israel’. These critical lectures (by Ulama scholars) focused on the fact that the US, through the involvement of outspoken groups such as the Christian Right and religious Jews in the country, were supporting Israel’s right to land due to writings in The Bible, thereby making it (as the Ulama claims) not merely a political but a religious act, contrary to the Saudi Arabian government’s response at the time. Actions of the religious leadership here highlight the influence that they have on the regime’s decision-making, in both domestic and foreign policy, and emphasises the complexities that exist in government policy in the country.

There is an interesting account by Niblock of the role that the liberals played in the development of Saudi politics during the 1990s and how their influence almost led to the westernisation and modernisation of the state, as well as the attempted acceptance of the western military forces in the country. Niblock argues that the introduction of US troops as

‘…foreign non-Muslim troops on Saudi Arabian territory in 1990 led to a new dynamic entering the relationship between the population and the state. This initially took the form of attempts by middle class elements to press for a widening of civil and human rights. They were taking advantage of an apparent weakness in the government’s previously hard-line stance on Western-inspired notions of civil rights.’

This point underlines that the liberal base had an apparent influence on the government during the early 1990s, a key period for the Arab-Israeli conflict with peace talks proposed by the United States at this time. This growth of Liberalism at the time even led to the ‘the most powerful expression of liberal middle class pressure for change; the demonstration organised by 45 Saudi women to press for the right of Saudi women to drive to be

In this argument, it is apparent that the Saudi Arabian government faced pressure from liberal groups as the 1990s decade developed with such groups, led by the middle class and women pushed for a modernisation of Saudi governance. As seen by the allowing of US troops on Saudi territory, this influence also expanded to the nature of Saudi foreign policy. The liberal base has increased the ‘pressure for reform from Saudi liberals and the growing foreign-educated middle class and this increased throughout the 1990s.’

When assessing the situation in the 1990s, the decisions taken were less welcomed by the religious conservatives and appealed more to the liberal modernisers. However, the situation in the 1990s, especially through the impact of the Gulf War and the Arab-Israeli conflict, highlights the impact that domestic groups could have on Saudi policy. The acceptance of US troops on Saudi soil, ostensibly to protect against Iraqi invasion, coupled with the US attempt to create peace talks between the Israeli and Palestinian sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict, led to a ‘period of intensive public debate … one of the most heated issues was the presence of American troops on Saudi soil and the dependence of Saudi Arabia on the United States for security … in the eyes of many Saudis, this amounted to a humiliation brought about by government mismanagement.’ The domestic pressure of liberal groups and the weakness of the Saudi government, as viewed by this mismanagement, have highlighted to many that the country is far too reliant on US support and that this impacts on the attitude towards key foreign policy issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, although this has been reduced through military imports as outlined below.

Cordesman highlights, due to Saudi Arabian reliance on US military resources and the growing relationship in security and military, Liberalism’s influence upon Saudi society is more likely to be increased. He notes that Saudi Arabia is currently trying to become independent militarily, and this helps to ‘explain why Saudi Arabia has ranked as one of the world’s ten largest military importers in every year of the past two decades. It ranked first in arms deliveries during 1989–1992 and 1996–1999… although it is not easy to make an accurate analysis of Saudi arms purchases. Saudi Arabia does not provide statistics on its military imports’. This attempt to increase their military strength could be as a response to conservative anger at the US presence in the country and as a way to gain strength in the volatile region of the Middle East. Despite this attempts to become independent through military imports, the US and liberal influence is growing in the country. This can be seen through the growth of the middle class, the fact that they are ‘often educated in the United States, they know the culture of the West but prefer to live and work in their own country and have a lifestyle much closer to the Western model than to the traditional Arabian one’. This growth in the ties between Saudi Arabia and the West has led to a situation in

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575 Ibid.
Saudi society where there is now a distinct challenge to the conservative voice by those calling for reform and peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict (the liberals). This has created a widening gap between liberals and those reverting to political Islam and the need for religious and political conservatism, as evidenced in the previous section, by the growth of radical Ulama. It is likely that this division will increase in size and tension as the twenty-first century develops, and this could have an important impact on the foreign policy of the government. This echoes Ayoob’s claim that developing nations are embattled in their development politically through domestic turmoil, with the growth of the liberal and conservative groups, meaning that the government has to balance these two opinions carefully and attempt to conduct foreign policy depending on the most influential voice at the time.

The difficulty of the situation can perhaps best be explained through the unique political and religious factors involved in the conflict, with the Saudi Arabian government frequently highlighting that they view the conflict as a political one, whereas the religious leadership underlines that it is impossible to remove the religious factors from the conflict, given the territory that is being fought over and the arguments provided by Israel as to why it should have a homeland in the region. The attitudes of the domestic groups should be combined with the external pressure placed on the Saudi government through both the power of the US and its support and security given to the Kingdom, but also the power that Saudi Arabia holds as one of the most influential Arab states.

The influence of domestic pressure groups has varied considerably during the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it appears as though these groups could become increasingly divided as we move forward in the twenty-first century. As an example, the 1973 oil crisis that began due to the Arab-Israeli conflict, witnessed the King take a conservative stance on the issue and reject the relationship with the US because of heavy influence from the Ulama and the country’s conservative base. This clearly indicates a link between the domestic influences and international factors, although in the present society, this relationship has become more complex due to the growth of the strategic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. This is due to the growth of extremist sections of the religious leadership, who hope to stymie both the growth of Liberalism in the country through western education and the belief that an alliance with the US is vital to protect Saudi Arabian interests. Although, the Subaltern Realism theory can help to explain the changes in the foreign policy behaviour of Saudi Arabia and highlight the domestic turbulence that exists in the country between liberals and conservatives, there are some limitations with Ayoob’s theory, specifically the level of influence held by each group on government decision-making.

The theory does help to explain Saudi Arabian foreign policy, particularly regarding the role that the US plays and the manner in which the government often surprises domestic groups by either acting in a liberal manner and supporting the peace process or by then taking a conservative stance and rejects the role that Israel has in the
region. As shown above, the domestic groups have had a growing influence on foreign policy decision-making, but the extent of this influence cannot be gauged. For example, although the religious leadership became outspoken of the regime’s decisions in the 1990s, this led to the imprisonment of their leaders, suggesting that the regime's power was such that it was able to achieve this without backlash. However, the release of these prisoners and the clear desire to work with them again in the late 1990s also acknowledge the influence that the religious leadership has, and therefore, it is difficult to assess fully the extent of this influence. Despite this, it is apparent that the Saudi Arabian government is under pressure from both domestic and external influences, and this highlights that Ayoob’s Subaltern Realism theory is an apt one for this analysis. The relationship with the United States for example is the major factor that helps to underlines the Subaltern status of Saudi Arabia. This is especially true during the early period of the relationship when the challenge of combining security with development and modernisation was paramount in Saudi minds. More recently, as the Kingdom has developed and stabilised more, it is perhaps possible to see more orthodox realist power politics come into play along with greater confidence of the Saudi leaders to carve their own path.

**Entering the 21st Century: The Second Intifada**

The outbreak of the Second Intifada presented Saudi Arabia with many problems related to its foreign policy. The country could not afford to condone the violence committed by some Palestinians, when it had already been so critical of the Israeli government and army for doing the same thing. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia had to be seen as committed to the floundering peace process in order to retain its spot as a regional leader in the conflict resolution process. In the end the Saudi foreign policy remained steady—the escalation of violence during the Intifada only saw Saudi Arabia stand up to Israel more firmly, and also to the United States on certain occasions. Saudi policy began to be more critical of Israel during this period, and was marked by a willingness to support the Palestinians financially and politically, and by joint Arab action against Israel. During the entire time, though, Saudi Arabia rarely spoke out against the terrorist acts perpetrated by the Palestinians, though did attempt to pressure the United States to intervene.

By this point the Saudi leadership had begun to see the Arab-Israeli conflict as the most destabilising force in the entire region, and as a serious threat to its own internal security. In a speech following a two day visit to Syria, Crown Prince Abdullah called for a renewal of the peace process: ‘The Israeli side has gone too far in its aggression, use of force, and arrogance…We urge all honest people in the world to contribute actively and with no bias to achieve just and comprehensive peace and we call up on the United States, Europe, and the whole world to
meet their historical commitments towards the peace process. Increased pressure on the United States by the Crown Prince followed—for the first time since the crisis began and since the American-Saudi economic and strategic alliance was forged, Saudi Arabia began to threaten the Americans that their relationship would falter if they did not step up their active involvement in attempting to find a peaceful settlement.

Recent Drive for Peace

Efforts to create a lasting peace settlement

Throughout the crisis Saudi Arabia has made several concerted efforts to lead the negotiations in the peace settlement. This started in earnest in 1981, prior to (and later overshadowed by) Israel’s war with Lebanon. As discussed briefly above, in that year, King Fahd tabled a peace plan that was aimed at encouraging peace initiatives without fanning Arab resentment; in this case Saudi Arabia was assuming a leadership role among the Arab people. The plan was less than successful however—when it was presented at an Arab League Summit in Morocco many states, including Libya, Mauritania, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria, denounced it as a betrayal.

Ultimately a watered down version was accepted a year later, but was forgotten after the Israel-Lebanon war.

Following the collapse of the Camp David peace talks in July 2000, Likud leader Ariel Sharon’s controversial visit to the Temple Mount or ‘the Holy Quds Mosque,’ in the autumn triggered massive Palestinian protests. These were met forcefully by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) using lethal weapons, causing many deaths and injuries. Saudi Arabia described it as ‘a predetermined and planned act by the Israeli government to destroy all possibilities of peace achievement in the Middle East region and to keep this area as the area of violence and destruction.’ To bring the violence to an end and establish peace, the Government of Saudi Arabia ‘asked the International Society, Security Council and its permanent members, especially USA, to take over all of their responsibilities and perform the required procedure as per UN conditions including the Seventh Chapter in order to assure again that they are on the side of, and supporting, Palestinian people until its legal right to return to its homeland is restored, and establish its independent state with the Holy Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital according to international legitimate resolutions.”


583 Ibid.
Building a case against Israeli occupation, ignoring US efforts, Saudi Arabia equated Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territory with racism. They stated that the racist policy of Israeli politicians, ‘based on haughtiness, cynicism, so-called racial superiority, the idea of chosen people and the ensuing nonchalant attitude towards international legitimacy, is a policy of a bygone epoch.’

Moreover, the description continued with the understanding that it was:

‘An epoch wherein Israel feels that it can give itself the right to use brute and wanton force against unarmed civilians in their own occupied territories, massacre them, assassinate their politicians, blow up their homes, apply collective sanctions against them, strangle their freedom, starve them, close or seal their sanctuaries and judaize their cities. These practices fall within the categories of human right breaches and violation of international humanitarian laws and norms.’

Despite the use of emotive language, Riyadh’s special pleading on the Palestinian’s behalf received little support from major players such as the UN Security Council’s permanent members, especially the USA. Saudi angst at the Palestinians’ plight, what Riyadh considered Israeli ‘aggressive practices,’ US refusal to apply meaningful pressure on Israel, and Riyadh’s inability to generate movement towards resolving the dispute exposed the frail bases on which its diplomatic stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was premised. Its simultaneous opposition to the occupation and any violent countermeasures forced Saudi Arabia to launch another diplomatic initiative.

Following this, there have been other efforts by various members of the Saudi royal family to play behind-the-scenes roles in the peace effort. The most notable of these was a proposal put forward by Crown Prince Abdullah in 2002, known later as the Saudi Peace Initiative (SPI). The SPI represented a very courageous approach and demonstrates Saudi Arabia’s long-standing commitment to peace as the only solution. One noteworthy factor of this peace initiative was that it was proposed in independence of the specific actors and outside of the events in Israel/the Occupied Territories itself.

By 2002, the Intifada had produced more than a thousand deaths and the peace process had long since lain dormant. At the basis of the proposal was an idea that had been floating around for dozens of years: exchanging land for peace. Under the plan, Israel would withdraw from all territories it had occupied since 1967, including the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; Israeli forces would withdraw from the occupied territories in full, especially the areas they re-occupied during the Intifada; and finally, in exchange for withdrawal,

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585 Ibid
peace would reign in the region: normal relations with the Arab states would ensue. The exact details would have to be hammered out by the relevant parties, plus the neighbouring states this would impact, namely, Syria and Lebanon. Unlike the previous effort at proposing a peace agreement in 1981, this one allowed Saudi Arabia to take a more neutral stance between the traditional Palestinian position, and also offered Israel recognition by the Arab states, in a marked change from previous policy. The SPI was very well received among the Arab quarters, the European Union, and the United States. Crown Prince Abdullah felt encouraged to raise the plan in the upcoming Arab League summit as a proposal for an all-Arab plan for peace. Minor changes were made, namely that Israel’s withdrawal of the 1967 territories should include withdrawal from south Lebanon. Additionally, a clause relating to Palestinian refugees, based on United Security Council Resolution 194 and the right of return of Palestinian refugees to the homes they had fled during the 1948/1949 period. A further change was that future negotiations would be conducted among the relevant parties only, this meant Syria, Israel, and the Palestinians, to the exclusion of the United States as adjudicator.

The SPI could not have come at a better time either, the Intifada had rendered the peace negotiations dead in the water, and relations between the Saudis and Americans were deteriorating, in light of the news that fifteen of the hijackers involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks were from Saudi Arabia. The SPI really confirmed Saudi Arabia’s role in the region as a leader and promoter of peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. Cordesman has responded to attacks on the Crown Prince by noting that he ‘had never been an opportunistic messenger or one likely to take such a stand simply to please the United States…Saudi public opinion, or Arab opposition. The fact that he extended such an olive branch made the proposal all the more significant.’ More significant was that the proposal gave Saudi Arabia world credibility as a player in the peace process. A separate proposal had been offered by Libya in 2001 at the Arab League Summit in Jordan, but League officials dismissed it as lacking credibility or momentum.

In March 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah made a new peace proposal at the Arab League’s Beirut summit. He suggested that Israel completely withdraw from all Arab territories including East Jerusalem, occupied in 1967 and agrees to a ‘just settlement’ of the Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The liberated West Bank and Gaza Strip would comprise a ‘sovereign and independent’ Palestinian state. In return, all Arab countries would open diplomatic relations with Israel and fully normalise ties, thereby ending the tacit state of conflict, which has existed since 1948. The summit endorsed this plan, and thereby accepted the suggestion that land-for-peace be the basis on which the Arab-Israeli conflict be ended. The Arab League reaffirmed its support for the plan at its

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2007 summit. While Saudi ‘moderation’ as opposed to the intransigence of Arab rejectionists like Syria, Libya and, until 2003, Iraq, occasionally generated Muslim criticism of Saudi diplomacy’s ineffectiveness with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Riyadh noted that

‘The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exerts its utmost in contacting the West, friendly nations, and the US Administration to pressure Israel for considering international resolutions that call for complete Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been further requesting the international community to interfere in order to stop the Israeli frequent and aggressive practices (sic) committed against Palestinian people.’

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia understands that minor concessions, such as settlement freezes will not thaw official relations between the countries but its 2002 proposal does demonstrate that Saudi Arabia is eager to find a mutually agreeable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The message of the 2002 proposal was reinforced by Prince Saud al-Faisal when he proposed that the United States should employ economic and military assistance in order to force Israeli concessions.

This indicates that Saudi Arabian foreign policy with regard to Israel has changed little over the last eight decades. The Saudi Arabians continue to see their relationship with the United States as an important way to produce pressure on Israel – a tactic that worked well in 1984. The Saudi Arabians also remain united with many other Arab states in seeing that the first step in a peace accord must be made by Israel and must involve a substantive withdrawal, rather than simply a promise to freeze future occupation.

Riyadh’s most important relationship, that with Washington, which offers a prism through which to view Saudi diplomacy, has been deeply affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Despite Washington’s urgings, Riyadh refused to adopt any ‘confidence building measures’ towards Israel beyond its peace proposals adopted by the Arab League. Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal told the UN, that the desired peace will ‘never be achieved by attempting to impose normalisation of relations on the Arabs before the completion of withdrawal and the establishment of peace, as though we are expected to reward the aggressor for his aggression in a reverse logic that totally lacks any form of serious credibility.’ This type of comment highlights that perhaps it is a more confident Saudi Arabia that is speaking, emphasising that more recently, the country has thrown off some of the shackles placed upon it by the Subaltern position that it held.

To encourage acceptance of the Kingdom’s pacific vision, and to dilute Palestinian/Arab anger at the failure to end the conflict using diplomatic means, Riyadh focused on the possible – utilising its considerable financial resources for humanitarian and developmental assistance to the Palestinians. At successive Arab League summits since the

590 Ibid.
1967 War, Saudi Arabia has offered bilateral grants while also coordinating the League’s and other international collective efforts to raise funds for the Palestinians.  

Nonetheless, when Israel began constructing the ‘separation barrier’ dividing Israeli and Israeli-occupied territory from the rest of the West Bank, Saudi Arabia condemned it as a ‘racial segregation wall,’ submitting a protest memorandum to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. In July 2004, the ICJ called on Israel to remove the wall. Having brought the Arab League around to accepting the concept of land-for-peace with Israel, Saudi Arabia urged the UN General Assembly and Security Council to secure Israeli compliance with all the relevant resolutions. However, given its inability to exercise leverage on the permanent members of the UN Security Council, and its deep dependence on the United States for guaranteeing its security, Riyadh’s diplomatic efforts proved unsuccessful. This exposed Saudi Arabia’s fundamental weakness and frayed its leadership in the Arab diplomatic firmament. The failure of the Saudi stance vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict to produce visible results may have led to resurgence among extremist tendencies which see no advantage in pursuing peace through diplomacy and this might increase the internal tensions within the kingdom.

The US-Saudi alliance has led to the acknowledgement that Ayoob’s theory of Subaltern Realism can account, at least in part, for the nature of the Kingdom’s foreign policy and shifting attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the domestic and external pressures interlinking, underlining the complexity of the situation and the problems associated with specific foreign policy relating to Israel and the Palestinian question. Indeed, in late 2006 King Abdullah highlighted three conflicts, which he felt would destabilise the region, although the country has also focused on modernisation in recent years. These were the continuing civil war in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, the conflict in Lebanon and the clashes between Fatah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. To this end, the SPI is the only plan endorsed by all Arab nations and the US and has recently been reconsidered by Israel. In fact, the Israeli

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1987 – Algiers summit: allocated a monthly grant of $6 million.
1987 – gave $1.43 million to the first Intifada Fund; gave $2 million to the International Red Cross to buy medical supplies for the Palestinians.
2000 – Cairo summit: granted $200 million to the Al-Aqsa Fund, and $50 million to the Al Qods Fund.
Annually pays $1.2 million as share of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) budget; paid $60.4 million as a special gift to cover UNRWA's budget deficit.
2004 – Tunis summit: granted $46.2 million.
Additionally, the Saudi government established committees to raise funds for Palestinian relief. 592
2007 – pledged $500 million-$750 million to the Palestinian Authority (PA) over three years 2009- launched campaign to collect funds for Palestinians; transferred $200 million to PA.
593 Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2004) Oral Pleading/International Court of Justice: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has dubbed the barrier wall currently being built by Israel rabia has dubbed the barrier wall currently being built by Israel law. Available at: http://www.mofa.gov.sa/sites/mofaen/ServicesAndInformation/Letters/Committees/Pages/NewsArticleID35125.aspx [Accessed 8 June 2014]
newspaper, Haaretz, stated, ‘Only Saudi Arabia can grant Israel regional recognition and legitimacy, in return for its withdrawals from the territories’. The renewed interest in the peace process given the official Saudi hostility towards Israel intensified by the Israeli capture of Jerusalem was triggered by the resurgence and regional ambitions of Iran. However, due to a largely anti-Israeli view on the Arab Street, Saudi leaders cannot go too far in the support for a peace settlement that is favourable to Israel. However, it can be seen once again that the Kingdom is treading the fine line between garnering international and regional support for a policy that in some quarters it has to criticise and go against in order to suppress domestic dissent.

The viewpoint that Ayoob’s theory of Subaltern Realism can account partly for the nature of the Kingdom’s foreign policy and shifting attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, is one that can also be highlighted through the country’s policy towards the situation in Lebanon. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has gone back and forth on its decisions and attitude concerning the situation. A recent study by Korany and Fattah indicates that the Saudi policy towards Lebanon has shifted recently, with the country taking a more hard-line stance towards the actions of the US and Israel. Their study notes that ‘Saudi Arabia made it formally clear that it was ‘disappointed’ in the US and international community position toward the Israeli aggression on the Lebanese people. This shift in the Saudi position triggered questions as to why Saudi Arabia had started by condemning Hezbollah and ended up more sympathetic to it.’

This relatively recent development underlines the conflicting nature of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy and further hints at the competing factors that influence the policy, leading to continual shifts of opinion. The policy can perhaps best be analysed as one that has an anti-Israeli directive at its heart (supporting the majority of internal attitudes held by religious and political groups and the wider population), but also that the government realises that it needs the relationship with the United States and requires stability in the area to ensure continued success and development. Therefore, by condemning terrorist and military attacks by both Israel and Hezbollah, it is clear that the policy aims to achieve a sense of stability in the region as the overriding policy, helping the government to further the interests of the country. Furthermore, the work by Korany and Fattah acknowledges the long-term competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia for dominance in the region. This further external influence has occurred through Iran being ‘active in supporting Hamas, which threatens the Saudi role in the region. That is why it was not bizarre to hear some Saudi Ulama warn Sunni Muslims against supporting a Hezbollah that functioned as an Iranian arm in the Sunni Arab countries.’

Through this statement, it adds more complexity to the situation, underlying that Saudi Arabia is heavily influenced by external developments in the region and that this, coupled with the religious and conservative elements in the country itself, have led to the foreign policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict shifting continuously depending on the

597Ibid
latest development and how the country reacts to these events.

**Summary**

This chapter attempted to highlight the ways in which Saudi Arabian policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict has displayed Subaltern qualities. Ayoob’s assessment of Subaltern status was an attempt to update the theory of Realism to account for the development of developing nations living in a postcolonial world. Therefore, this discussion took into account the nature of the external factors (the US and the wider Arab World) as well as the internal factors (liberal modernisers and the conservative religious elite) that underlined the vulnerabilities that the Saudi Arabian government has to take into account when developing its foreign policy. This has underlined why the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been so controversial in Saudi Arabia, because the country has been impacted by all sides of the debate by key voices and influences, complicating the position of the Kingdom in relation to this issue.

Within the context of the Subaltern analysis, the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict is complex and so too is the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia towards this conflict in the region. This chapter has aimed to highlight the importance of the internal and external influences on Saudi Arabian foreign policy. Through this, it has endeavoured to provide an enhanced understanding of Saudi Arabia’s attitudes toward and treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Saudi Arabian foreign policy has shifted over time, with short-term factors within each specific episode heavily influencing its policy. However, several salient features in the policy have always been retained. First, Saudi Arabia has remained largely independent from its neighbouring Arab states in its treatment of Israel—it avoided the nationalist Arab movements and did not commit military troops on the levels seen in the other states. Saudi Arabia seemed to act as if it was marching to the tune of its own drum—this was highlighted when it refused to acknowledge the Egypt-Israel peace agreement, threatening its relationship with both its greatest Western ally and a great regional power. There were times, however, when Saudi Arabia had to act in accordance with the wishes of its neighbours; with examples including the refining of the two peace agreements proposed by the Saudi leadership in 1981 and 2002.

One further feature of Saudi foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict has been Saudi Arabia’s focus on the Islamic elements of the conflict. In this regard, Saudi Arabia does not view the conflict as one between Arab and Israeli, rather between Islam and Israel. The threat to Jerusalem and Saudi Arabia’s reaction to the 1967 war showed this. Saudi Arabia has, moreover, mostly supported the diplomatic process and negotiations to resolve the conflict and end the violence and tension in the region, and showed that it was serious by threatening both regional instability and its strategic and economic alliance by using oil as a negotiating weapon with the United States in 1973. But this support for the peace process has only occurred when the general tension around the conflict was
reduced; Saudi Arabia was always quick to condemn Israel when the peace process flagged or failed at times.

The situation involving Israel and the overall Arab-Israeli conflict is a challenging task for the royal family, precisely because it has its own divisions, as well as those that exist in society through the traditional religious leadership and liberals that have emerged. These internal divisions, even within the Royal Family itself, make it difficult to follow any particular policy with a hard line approach. The royal family has attempted to develop its foreign policy through compromises over the past three decades. Stenslie argues that ‘the Royal Family has tried to solve its dilemma by adopting an anti-Israeli rhetoric while trying to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and has twice offered its own peace plans. Saudi Arabia has continued its quiet talks with Israel ever since’.\(^{598}\)

Through this admission, it is evident that the royal family is well aware of domestic divisions over foreign policy, particularly the complex relationship with the Arab-Israeli conflict due to the strong belief of Arab nationalism and a homeland for the Palestinians, tempered by the need to remain allied with the United States.

The extent of this influence is varied but is thought to impact at certain levels of government decision-making, specifically on those in the Royal Family that have a conservative leaning on the issue.\(^{599}\) The desire to become involved in peace talks was due to the need to become closely allied to the US. The literature highlights that ‘from the perspective of the leadership, keeping the Saudi Monarchy out of the US-orientated peace process was part of the demand for political reform, while the initiation of a relationship with Israel was seen as enhancing the Saudi-US alliance’.\(^{600}\) Interestingly, the reaction of the government was to arrest key members of the Ulama, but their release a few years later indicates the important role that the religious leadership plays in Saudi society and the influence that it has on government policies. In terms of the Subaltern Realism perspective, it is perhaps clear that the most important factor is the relationship with the US, not just because of the ties to US oil sales and the strength of the western power, but also through the Saudi desire to gain more power in the region that Iran, its most direct competitor. Therefore, the external factors have led to the need to attempt peace plans in the region and to help facilitate talks along with the US. Without the need for the US as an ally, the country’s policy towards Israel would perhaps be more aggressive and in support of other Arab nations, with the view that the strong anti-Israeli sentiment in Saudi (and wider Arabic) society would help to sway the government’s official stance towards the conflict.

Therefore, through the assessment of the position of Saudi Arabia in the region, and its developing foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is clear that the country displays signs of still being in a Subaltern status. For example, the country is one that has high levels of wealth, with the natural resources owned by Saudi Arabia


\(^{600}\) Ibid., p. 119.
dwarfing most of the other countries globally. However, despite this wealth the country exhibits features of a Subaltern status, particularly because of the influence of the United States and the fact that the Saudi Arabian foreign policy has often been decided in a manner that seemingly aims to not anger its external allies in the West. The position of Saudi Arabia on the Arab-Israeli conflict is a clear example of this Subaltern status, with the view that the foreign policy of the country has been influenced greatly by other factors, including both internal and external elements during the past seventy years.

The assessment in this analysis has outlined that the Subaltern Realism perspective can adequately help to evaluate the Saudi position in the region over the past seventy years, although the country is gradually becoming more confident and is not as tied to the United States as it has been in the past. This growth of national confidence has been reflected in the development of peace deals in the region as well as the country becoming far more active in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the past two decades. This analysis of the latter period has underlined that the country has managed to overcome (to a certain extent at least) some of the challenges that of modernisation, although the country is still divided between liberals and conservatives, as well as the religious elite (the Ulama). Therefore, Saudi Arabia is evidently still impacted by tension between the notions of tradition and modernity, though there are signs that this is reducing. Nonetheless, there is still an evident reliance on the US (though also perhaps reducing slightly) and it is this that emphasises the continuing Subaltern status of the country in regard to the development of its foreign policy. This reliance on a foreign power is a staple part of the Subaltern realist perspective and underscores the continuing utility of Ayoob’s theory in the analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This chapter presented an analysis of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, in the context of major events concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. The next chapter wishes to draw together the information gathered in this analysis and move towards a conclusive analysis. These conclusions focus on the effectiveness of the Subaltern realist perspective in helping to understand the development of Saudi foreign policy within the context of the historical Arab-Israeli conflict.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Overview

This chapter presents the major conclusions made in this study. The concluding chapter of any major work needs to emphasise the main findings of the study but the chapter also covers more than that. The presentation of the findings by themselves only go so far in achieving the main aims of this study and the researcher’s initial intention when developing the subject. Also in need of consideration are the implications for future research and how the findings can help to improve the knowledge of the situation concerning the nature of Saudi foreign policy with particular reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict through the perspective of the Subaltern realist view of International Relations.

This chapter is divided into the following major areas of discussion. First, it is important to briefly restate the major aims of the work and the research questions that were posed at the beginning. Following this, the largest part of the chapter provides a summary of the major findings, focusing on how Subaltern Realism can help to explain Saudi foreign policy and the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on this, as well as Saudi decision-making surrounding the conflict. Integrated into this summary are discussions on the link between internal and international elements, the role of the Ulama in decision-making, the rising Islamist tide in Saudi Arabia and the region more broadly, and how the theoretical views of the Subaltern Realism model help to explain this and the extent to which it is not able to. Subsequently, the conclusion then identifies the suggested implications of these findings for the future of Saudi Arabian foreign policy and domestic developments. Perhaps the most important part of the analysis though is the next section that presents the significance of the findings. In essence, this section aims to stress what the study has found and how this impacts on regional security in the foreseeable future, as well as for international diplomatic relationships in the region and globally.

The final three sections concern the extent to which this study has been limited by its scope and how the research field can develop this study further. First, the limitations of the current study are highlighted, in an attempt to advise future studies in the same research area as well as to improve the validity of the work. Following this, recommendations for further work are given, focusing on the limitations of the application of the Subaltern realist viewpoint and how other models could be applied to enhance the knowledge of the subject further. Finally, the implications and recommendations for practice and policy are discussed, ensuring that the concluding chapter has included all areas and discussed all the salient points that have arisen during the analysis.
The purpose of this research was to consider the implications of the Arab-Israeli Conflict on the Saudi decision-making process. To achieve this, the study required a wide ranging discussion relating to the various influences on Saudi foreign policy making, from international factors to domestic factors. It has become clear that Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy makers face a difficult task. Employing a ‘Subaltern Realism’ approach, which takes a deeper account of historical and internal factors, this thesis has endeavoured to show that there are myriad factors, which influence how these policies are formed in its relations with the United States, the Saudi regime has walked a tense path between keeping a close relationship with its key economic and military partner, while avoiding being seen as too close and too Western in order to forestall criticism from Islamists both at home and abroad. At the same time, the regime has attempted to maintain a leadership role in the Arab world while opposing the secular Pan-Arabism of Nasser’s Egypt. This role has been further complicated by the regional security situation in the Persian Gulf, which rests on an uneasy balance of power between Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Events like the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf War, and the US invasion of Iraq have severely altered this balance, forcing Saudi Arabia to adapt and often to take on a greater security role than the Saudi leadership – who view themselves more as religious or spiritual leaders of the region – really desired. Nevertheless, these events have tended to strengthen the Saudi’s regional position, rather than weaken it.

Restatement of the Aims

The main aim of this thesis was to test the claim that the Arab-Israeli conflict has had a significant bearing on the Saudi national decision making process and its foreign policy in the Middle East region more generally. The main focus was to establish whether the foreign policy has been influenced by international or domestic factors and groups and highlighted that the main line of enquiry would be whether the domestic factors played the most important role in the making of Saudi foreign policy. As well as this, the study also had secondary aims such as discovering the most suitable theoretical framework to understand Saudi foreign Policy features and tensions, how Saudi foreign policy operates and if there were any tensions internally or externally. It was also important to discover the Saudi government’s stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. These questions were all addressed through the lens of Subaltern Realism. The summary of the findings is presented below.

A Summary of the Findings

The summary of the findings focuses on completing a broad to narrow analysis of the results of the study, beginning with a discussion of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and then deconstructing it, assessing how far domestic and international influences are linked, the important role of the Ulama, the implications of the rising Islamist tide and how far the overall foreign policy can be explained through the use of the Subaltern realist view of International Relations.
In a final summary of the findings from this study, it is important to recognise the crucial relationship between foreign policy and domestic development in order to truly understand the dynamics of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Not only are Saudi foreign policy options constrained by domestic and internal considerations, but external events – particularly events involving Palestinians – have also played an important role in the development of the relationship between the state, the Ulama, the conservative majority, and the liberal minority in the country. In a post-9/11 and post-Arab Spring world, the old alliance between the Ulama and the House of Saud now appears increasingly unstable, as radical Islamic elements within Saudi Arabia no longer accept the consensus based decision making process favoured by the Islamic religious elites, and instead want immediate, radical social change. It is also important not to misunderstand the intent of many domestic critics of the undemocratic nature of the Saudi regime: though Saudi Arabia is by far the most officially devout and conservative nation on Earth, the conservative forces within the country want an even more ‘pure’ form of government, particularly one which scraps the Saudi relationship with the US and takes a more hard-lined approach to the Palestinian issue. Though conditions in Saudi Arabia, such as high unemployment of educated youths, might make the potential for an Arab Spring-style liberal uprising seem possible, it must be remembered that the majority of the population is extremely conservative and any state resulting from a democratic process would likely be just as conservative as the present regime, if not far more so. Whether this constitutes an effective argument against more democracy, however, depends on the observer’s position. While the US may prefer a stable, undemocratic ally to a more radicalised and contentious partner or even opponent, it is hard to argue that the government of a country should not reflect the wishes of its population. If those wishes lead a democratic Saudi Arabia to, for example, openly support terrorist groups in the Palestinian Territories, then this is an issue that needs to be resolved within Saudi society and not an argument against democracy per se. The Arab-Israeli Conflict has wide and important implications on the Saudi decision making process because it is an issue that draws together and involves all of the many, complex and multi-faceted external and internal factors that impact on Saudi foreign policy decisions.

The main conclusions of the study highlight that the analysis of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy in the region within the Subaltern Realism perspective does not necessarily explain all tenets of the policy and that it is limited in this respect. The study does acknowledge that the Subaltern realist view does help to explain certain elements of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy, in particular the influence of the United States on foreign policy that has manifested itself with the support given to the peace process between Israel and Palestine and the importance of the immediate Middle East neighbourhood as opposed to the wider international community. However, the application of the Subaltern realist view does not help to explain the importance of domestic factors that influence foreign policy or the intricate complexities that are involved in the Kingdom’s foreign policy towards the Arab-
Israel conflict.

The Subaltern Realism view is too structured and has its limitations when helping to explain the nature of the Saudi foreign policy, the influence of domestic factors on this and how it impacts on the regional and global communities. In this manner, it is clear that Subaltern Realism theory fails to explain the state's behaviour within the Middle East, especially in the Arab world and the Gulf region more generally. There are also other factors that lead to this conclusion including the fact that in creating his Subaltern Realism view, Ayoob has not explained the effect of the liberal group in society and its impact on policy and only focused on the extremist influences. Through this, the discussion of Saudi Arabian foreign policy becomes too complex to be explained by the theory, because of all of the conflicting groups in domestic and external society and how they impact simultaneously on the government of Saudi Arabia. The limitation of Subaltern Realism will be discussed in more detail below.

**Overview of Saudi Foreign Policy**

Initially, it is important to discuss the findings of the analysis of the Saudi foreign policy in the region. The country’s major relationships are with the United States and the Gulf monarchies which share similar characteristics such as religion, economic strategies, outward looking foreign policies, and political system. On the other hand, Iran sits as its major rival in the region resulting from theological differences (Sunni v. Shi’a) as well as contrasting systems of government.

Based on such evidence we may note that despite continued rebuttals of their proposals, Saudi Arabia has adopted a foreign policy of mediation between polar positions in the current climate. It’s an internal and external position, relying on a solid union of government opinion as much as a system of negotiations with other Arab states, and the rest of the world. Indeed, through the development of its foreign policy, Saudi Arabia has accrued the unique potential to make lasting progress towards peace between Arab and Israeli factions. As a state, it has essentially been corralled into a position whereby in order to assure its own security, it must cooperate with both sides to an equal degree of diligence. Since its interests lie with both anti and pro-Israeli factions, then its goal is to reach a compromise, which satisfies both ties to the maximum degree. This could in turn provide a useful model on which to build tolerance and compromise from other Arab states. However, dissent from both factions with regard to Saudi proposals has shown that compromise may not be easily reached. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia must also deal with those extremist factions within its own boundaries not prepared to compromise.

The application of the Subaltern Realism perspective to the subject has allowed a much greater focus on the domestic influences of groups such as the conservatives (lead by the Ulama), the liberal and the House of Saud, as well as the belief that the Saudi government has to also take into account the wishes of the United States, as their most powerful ally in the region. The analysis indicated that the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-
Israeli conflict is one that has developed through the years but has generally been criticised by its neighbours in the region as not being sufficiently supportive of the destruction of Israel and the re-establishment of Palestinians in their rightful home. However, this should be tempered with the fact that Saudi Arabia is in a difficult position as a current key player in the region with an oil-based economy, which means ties to the West are vital. As well as this, the analysis of domestic influence groups expresses the view that direction of Saudi Arabian foreign policy and its activities in the region are debated at every level of Saudi society, particularly between religious extremists and the more moderate Saudis that have been educated in the West and see potential long-term benefits of maintaining a positive diplomatic relationship with the United States. These individual factors and tensions are discussed below, including an overview of the main conclusions drawn from the linkage between domestic and external influences (as proposed by the Subaltern Realism perspective championed by Ayoob), the role of the Ulama, the changing nature of foreign policy through the rise of the Islamist tide and the overall effectiveness of applying the Subaltern Realism perspective to a situation as complex as the analysis of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Linking the Internal and the International**

In understanding how Saudi Arabia negotiates this complicated and difficult international environment, it is not sufficient to view the Saudi regime as a ‘black box’, which pursues only Saudi Arabia’s national interests in a Classical realist fashion. Trying to understand Saudi Arabia in this way will lead to unpleasant surprises. A truer interpretation of Saudi foreign policy must also take into account the complex internal divisions and the delicate balance of power within Saudi Arabia, which has traditionally rested on an alliance between the Wahhabi religious leaders of the Ulama and the political leadership of the House of Saud. While the exact structural relationship between these two groups has varied over time, it is generally the case that political decisions – including important foreign policy decisions – are undertaken by the state only after achieving some kind of consensus from the Islamic religious elite. However, in recent years this balance has begun to break down. Traditionally, the Ulama have played an important pseudo-representative role by allowing for the expression of dissenting voices within the policy making sphere and by representing the deeply held Islamic values of a large section of Saudi society. For example, it was the Ulama, which forced the state to take a more proactive role in the Arab-Israeli conflict after the 1967 war, reflecting the desires of a large majority of Saudi citizens. However, after the Ulama’s controversial fatwa allowing the government to invite American troops into the country, and the failure of those troops to leave as promised after the war, the relationship between the mainstream of the religious elite and the more extreme conservative elements within society began to break down, and Islamic resistance against the regime (and by ‘regime’ here is meant both the Ulama and the monarchy) began to rise.

This notably led to the emergence of bin Laden’s Al Qaeda organisation, but also to an unprecedented wave of
terrorism within Saudi Arabia against both foreign and, increasingly, domestic targets. With large sections of the Islamist population becoming more and more radical, and with no end in sight to the Palestinian issue, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Saudi regime to manage its important relationship with the United States without offending a significant part of the population. Furthermore, the Ulama are becoming increasingly unhelpful in defusing this tension, in part because elements of the religious elite sympathise with these radical sentiments. Therefore, it is apparent that when applying a Subaltern Realism perspective over the Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, the importance of the domestic and external influence and how they interrelate are crucial factors involved in the overall development of foreign policy. This study has been effective in highlighting the tensions that exist in Saudi society, with the Ulama both supported and criticised in equal measure depending on the relative size of the religious extremist groups that exist at the time. Throughout the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the tensions have increased and decreased through both internal and external developments. It is currently noted that the situation in Saudi Arabia is deteriorating, in terms of societal views concerning foreign policy with a split between domestic groups, with a growing number of individuals aligning themselves with either religious extremists or liberal groups, highlight this increasing division. Moreover, this analysis has highlighted a distinct link between the internal and domestic influences with international factors. The relative power held by each group in Saudi Arabia at any given time can genuinely impact the ability of external forces to influence foreign policy, as seen with the power of the Ulama that led to US troops being stationed in the country. Interestingly the Arab world is reflecting the divisions in Saudi society, with many parts of the overall population wanting reform and moderate policies while others wish for a serious return to religious extremism and a stricter Arab society. Saudi Arabia appears to be a microcosm of this wider conflict and this helps to reflect the complexities involved in the foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict as the Saudi government continues to be in the midst of an ideological battle instigated by domestic groups.

The Role of the Ulama

The vital role that Islam plays in underpinning the legitimacy of the Saudi state, while simultaneously constraining its policy options has been considered. The role of Islam in the political life in the kingdom has, since the middle of the eighteenth century, been based on an alliance between the political authorities and the Wahhabi religious elite, which espouses a fundamentalist form of ‘ultra pure’ Sunni Islam. The model of consensus based decision-making, which is called for by Islamic law and is employed by all Arab regimes, regardless of their formal structure, gave the Ulama an important role, which was not always clear to outside observers. That is, despite being an absolute monarchy, the Saudi royal family does not have complete freedom of action: they have always had at least one major domestic constituency (the Ulama) to please in making their decisions, including foreign policy decisions.
To see how deep and powerful the influence of the Ulama is, one has to look no further than any of Saudi Arabia’s most important foreign policy actions. For example, the 1973 oil embargo, which greatly strained Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the United States, put huge pressure on Israel, placed Saudi Arabia into a more leading role in the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict, and cost the Kingdom huge amounts of money, was the result of the Ulama convincing King Faisal that this decision was right for the country. It is hard to imagine an interest group in any other country, even in a democratic country, capable of forcing a foreign policy shift of this magnitude. While the influence of the religious elites arguably declined in the 1970s, when the country was attempting to build a modern state along Western lines while still staying true to its Islamic roots, the importance of the Ulama was revealed again during the Gulf War. Even though the country was under direct peril from massing Iraqi military forces, which the Saudi army was in no way equipped to face, the decision to accept military assistance from the country’s most important ally could not be undertaken, even by the absolute monarchy, without the consent of the Ulama.

Unfortunately for the religious elites, it was this fatwa, which began their decline, relative to more radical Islamist forces, in the 1990s. For many Saudis, the Ulama were no longer seen as the ultimate embodiment of Islamic purity in the Kingdom; rather, they were seen as tainted through their association with an irredeemably corrupt regime and their failure to press issues such as the continued presence of American troops or the Palestinian peace process. Interestingly, this has led not only to Islamist terrorism but a growing criticism of the regime’s undemocratic nature by Islamic groups who wish to remove the monarchy and impose a more religiously pure form of government. In this regard, radical Islamists are increasingly allied with more moderate liberals, since both groups want to see greater political participation in the decision making processes of the kingdom and more representation of the people’s true wishes in government.

The regard in which the Ulama are held in Saudi Arabia helps to reflect its influence on foreign policy. However, it needs to be stressed that the group’s influence has fluctuated throughout the years depending on how it has been perceived by the wider population and in particular the religious extremists. As seen above, the influence of the Ulama can be viewed through the 1973 oil embargo crisis and the First Gulf War but through the acceptance of US troops on Saudi soil, the Ulama seriously damaged its relationship with the more extremist sections of the population and has therefore led to its reduced power in decision-making, although it still clearly has influence in foreign policy. The fact there is also internal division within the Ulama, with more moderate (non-religious militant) sections and elements of extremism existing, also highlights the complexity associated with this analysis and the difficulty in assessing the precise influence that the Ulama exerts on foreign policy.

The Rising Islamist Tide

The majority of conservatives in Saudi Arabia has recently been tainted by their association with extremist forces,
whether domestic or international terrorist groups. The Saudi state has itself been implicated in providing support to groups that have carried out terrorist actions in the past, though it is hard to delineate specific state support from the ‘private’ support of charities and individual members of the Saudi Royal Family, since there is little official distinction between state and private resources. For example, Hamas, which has been listed as an official terrorist organisation by the US State Department, was estimated in the early 2000s to obtain some 50 per cent of its funding from Saudi individuals and charities – though this amount, $5 million or so, pales in comparison to the $80-100 million in official support to the Palestinian Authority, which is officially considered by Saudi Arabia as the ‘sole representative of the Palestinian people’.

With a spate of Al Qaeda linked bombings in Saudi Arabia recently, the government has moved strongly to suppress that group within the Kingdom. However, there is no doubt that Saudi individuals – including, presumably, members of the Ulama and even the royal family – continue to directly and indirectly support Islamist radical groups around the world. There are several logical reasons why they might do this, beyond ideological commitment. First, such support, especially rhetorical or public relations support, such as extremist conservative textbooks produced for Palestinians, can help to gain the approval of conservatives within the country. In some cases, supporting ‘borderline’ groups which may have a legitimate political role is seen as a necessary foreign policy tactic, especially in post-war Iraq, where Saudi Arabia is extremely concerned about Shia reprisals against the Sunni minority as well as the growing influence of Iran. Financial support also entails an element of control, allowing the Saudis to moderate the actions of extremist groups and influence their actions, as in 2009 when the Saudi government urged Hamas to restore ties with the Fatah movement. In practice, however, the Islamist ties of prominent Saudis mainly creates problems for Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the West and encourages more radicalism at home, including deadly terrorist attacks against the state and even against civilians. The rising of the Islamist tide in recent years has also highlighted a key divide in Arabic societies and Saudi Arabia is no exception. Whereas previously, Saudi society tended to be dominated by moderates or liberals, with sections of both religious extremism and progressives (Reformers) at either end of the spectrum (remaining on the periphery but influential), it is now the case that the society is becoming increasingly divided, with these two sections both growing in their support. Through this, the fate of Saudi Arabian foreign policy is unknown because while support for the US alliance grows, also does the anti-American sentiment in the country and this could lead to serious division in Saudi Arabia.

**Effectiveness of Subaltern Realism Theory**

The application of the Subaltern realist perspective to the subject of Saudi foreign policy, specifically policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict, should be viewed as a successful analytical tool to a certain extent. The application of the perspective has enabled a more enhanced analysis of the complexity of the Saudi foreign policy. Ayoob’s theory
has emphasised the important links between domestic influences and international actors and this study confirms the existence of such a linkage within Saudi foreign policy and its decision-making, depending on domestic and international influences. The Arab-Israeli conflict and its subsequent analysis from the viewpoint of Saudi foreign policy can be said to have important implications on the Saudi decision making process. This is mainly because it is an issue that brings together the major complexities that exist in Saudi society, particularly including those domestic and international factors that weigh heavily on the ability of the government to manage and to develop suitable foreign policy for the region. The importance of domestic groups such as the conservatives (including the Ulama), the Royal Family, and the liberals have a determining influence on the development of foreign policy and the relative power that each has at any given time leads to the increase or decrease of the influence of international factors respectively.

When analysing Ayoob’s theory and how it relates to the situation in Saudi Arabia, it is clear that two main strands of critical assessment appear. First, Subaltern Realism appears to be too structured. This criticism refers to the fact that the theory does not seem to allow for any small differences that might exist from the initial analysis conducted by Ayoob. In this manner, the situation in Saudi Arabia can be answered using the Subaltern Realism perspective but it does not allow for an understanding of the complexities within the domestic issues. The theory proposes that internal and external factors all compete to influence foreign policy and the development of a nation, but the conflicting roles of the liberals and the conservatives in society add a more complex undertone to the analysis and this is not necessarily covered by the Subaltern perspective. For example, the Subaltern Realism perspective acknowledges the relationship between internal and external factors in determining foreign policy as highlighted above. However, the influences involved in the Saudi Arabian situation are far more complex and interlinked. There is pull on both sides (liberal and conservative) and these factors are impacted by a desire of the Saudi government to be a powerful and independent country in the region, but this is tempered by their inability to defend themselves against aggressors. This has led to the role and growing influence of the United States in the situation and this has made the need to modernise and become more liberal a pressing requirement, aligned against the desire to remain in a traditional society by those conservatives and the Ulama.

Moreover, it is also prudent to point out that Ayoob’s theory tends to ignore the role that liberals play in the development of policy. This is part of the complex issue as outlined above and it is evident that the liberals in Saudi society have had a growing, if fluctuating, level of influence on Saudi foreign policy. This second criticism is not necessarily a criticism of the theory itself but of Ayoob’s use of the theory. This is perhaps the same thing at the current time as his theory has not been fully developed or used in multiple scenarios. It is not the need to take into account domestic groups that are being questioned, but the fact that Ayoob seems to not give any weight to the importance of the influence of the liberal group in a developing country’s foreign policy and overall
development. With this in mind, it is apparent that the decline of the Ulama could have interesting consequences for Saudi Arabian foreign policy. This decline has been met with a growth in radical Islamist beliefs and liberal views (the two opposing ends of the political spectrum). This split, depending on the attitude of the contemporary government, could have important ramifications for Saudi foreign policy. Control by a royal family member that is allied with the US would lead to a more liberal foreign policy, focusing on peace but control by the conservative elements of the royal family and government could lead to a reduced role for the liberal base, which would then support Ayoob’s initial use of the Subaltern Realism theory. Therefore, the Saudi decision making is obviously far more complicated than it seems to be and the use of the Subaltern Realism perspective can be applied to a certain extent to explain the situation in Saudi Arabia, but this extent depends on the levels of influence that certain domestic groups have, as well as the overall external factors that impinge on foreign policy decision-making at the governmental level.

**Suggested Implications**

The analysis of the findings helps lead to a plethora of suggested implications for Saudi foreign policy generally, the Arab-Israeli conflict more specifically and for the development of relationships in the region (externally and internally) as we move forward into the future. The major implications for the foreign policy in the area are far more likely that Saudi Arabia will need to find a way to balance the attitudes of the liberals and the extremists in society. The important influence that both groups have on decision-making, with liberals championing the relationship with the United States and the extremists pushing for a hard line approach and a reduction of the influence of the United States, combined with the fact that both groups are growing in support, means that eventually the situation will come to a head.

In this situation, the Ulama’s power seems to be waning and this could lead to a situation in which another group of conservatives might emerge and threaten to destabilise the Monarch and the current governmental system. When focusing centrally on the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is apparent that the increased influence of conservatives and extremists could lead to a renewed interest in the conflict as a way of asserting Saudi influence in the area, reducing the support for peace in the region and possibly leading to further instability in the Middle East. It is certainly believed that the reduced role or influence of the United States in Saudi decision making would make the situation much more unstable, mainly due to the fact that peace has been sought (much to the anger of conservatives) as a part of the Saudi foreign policy when the US has been allowed to influence, such as after the First Gulf War in the early 1990s. However, the increase of power and influence of the conservatives would reduce this role and lead to hardliners influencing policy, which could lead to a more aggressive policy aimed at supporting the rights of Palestinians in the region that would increase tensions dramatically.
Limitations of the Current Study

There are a number of limitations that are associated with this study and need to be outlined in this section. The admission and acknowledgement of these limitations helps to improve the validity and reliability of this work, as well as highlighting to other researchers in the field how to progress with a further analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy in the Middle East, or the analysis of another country’s foreign policy in the global community using the Subaltern Realism perspective. The limitations should be divided into two distinct sections including the researcher-based limitations (those limitations that arose out of the completion of the study and because of human judgement) and the elements of study that were limited through a lack of development in the International Relations field. Before these limitations are discussed, it is first important to indicate that limitations in any particular research study are not necessarily a negative aspect of the study. Indeed, it is thought by this researcher that limitations placed on a study help to focus the work and narrow down the aims so that they are achievable within the given period needed for the completion of the work. Therefore, although there are limitations associated with this study, it should be stressed that this is not a hindrance but merely a fact of reality and helps to point further research in the direction necessary to ensure an enhancement of understanding on the subject.

The main limitations are those that are researcher-based. The analysis of Saudi Arabian foreign policy through the Subaltern Realism perspective, focusing mainly on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the relative importance of domestic and international influences was based primarily on secondary source analysis. The work used academic sources that helped provide key information on the situation in Saudi Arabia and the particular leverage of each source of influence. However, although the academic analysis was successful at identifying key parts of the influence on foreign policy, it should be noted that the work was somewhat limited because of this reliance on secondary sources and the lack of primary sources in terms of being able to discuss Saudi Arabian foreign policy with government officials or members of each of groups that may have influenced it. Although this type of access is rarely granted for research studies, it is believed that this type of contact information and data stemming from interviews would have been able to dramatically increase the knowledge of the precise level of influence that each group has on the foreign policy. However, as the topic of the Arab-Israeli conflict is extremely sensitive in the region and for all the major players in the area as well as those that have influence but are based outside of the Middle East (such as the United States), it was unlikely that this access would ever be granted. Nevertheless, information from individuals with direct access to Saudi Arabian foreign policy would have improved the precision of the analysis related to this study.

Moreover, perhaps the single most important limitation on the study’s ability to gauge the level of influence that certain groups have had on Saudi Arabian foreign policy was that of the reliance of the study on the researcher’s own interpretation. The information received, evaluated and synthesised by the study was ultimately interpreted
by the researcher and then placed into the study. Through this, the objectivity of the researcher was maintained at all times but the final say on the information included in the analysis was given to the researcher. The use of interpretation means that other researchers conducting the same study may have come to other conclusions. This though is a consequence of all research studies and despite the interpretational nature of the work, it should be underlined that this study can still inform commentators and researchers of Middle East diplomacy and enhance the knowledge of the complexity surrounding the nature of Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and the wider region.

This section also needs to analyse the limitations that exist in terms of applying International Relations theory to world events. It has already been discussed that the reliance of International Relations scholars on academic studies means that the writings on the subject tend to be educated conjecture and not necessarily a true representation of global politics. This is because of the secrecy ascribed to areas such as foreign policy and its importance in helping shape the international community, created through a lack of trust by national governments towards their foreign counterparts. This is not a new problem in this field. However, the use of Ayoob’s Subaltern Realism perspective (a new International Relations theory in the field) does have its limitations. The study was based on this perspective and attempted to fit Saudi foreign policy into the theory, seeing whether the perspective could help explain the situation in the Middle East from a Saudi viewpoint. Placing a real life situation into a theoretical viewpoint is always difficult unless the theory is based upon the situation itself and therefore there are clear limitations of using the Subaltern Realism perspective as well as the fact that Ayoob’s theory is not universally accepted or widespread among the literature. Despite this, it also does help to explain to a certain extent the situation concerning Saudi Arabian foreign policy and has helped to extend and enhance the knowledge of the subject, especially focusing on the extent of domestic influence in Saudi Arabia, the complex relationship with the United States and the impact of both of these on the development of foreign policy for the region. §

**Recommendations for Further Work**

There are numerous recommendations for further work in this research area that have stemmed from this study. The work has conducted a thorough analysis into the subject but it is highlighted that there is much more that can be done to improve the understanding of Saudi Arabian foreign policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. The main element of research that could be improved is that of the Saudi foreign policy in contemporary society and into the future. This current study has assessed the application of the Subaltern Realism perspective from a historical perspective and has analysed important events throughout the past half-century. Although the study has also assessed the more recent impact of changes in the region, such as the growth of terrorism and the change in domestic circumstances and the status of groups such as the *Ulama*, it is necessary to conduct a modern day analysis of the foreign policy and how Saudi Arabian foreign policy might develop as we move into the future.
This study has noted several implications for foreign policy due to the developments within certain influential groups but a study is needed that is dedicated to current analysis.

Other recommendations include the need to assess Saudi foreign policy with a detailed analysis of the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia. With the view that conservatives may gain more power in the near future due to regional developments and changes in the domestic groups that influence policy, a thorough study of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States would allow conclusions to be drawn as to whether their relationship could survive these potential changes in policy and how the relationship could remain stable to help protect the fragile peace that currently exists in the country. Finally, it is recommended that the study be assessed in terms of the diplomatic relationships that Saudi Arabia has with the other Arabic nations in the region. This study focused solely on the impact of the relationship with the United States, mainly because the Subaltern Realism viewpoints towards developing nations are being influenced by powerful external influences. Therefore, the United States influence was discussed but the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Arabic world was not to any great extent. In this manner, a key part of the overriding assessment of the situation was not commented on and this should be provided in a future study on the subject.

Implications/ Recommendations for Practice and Policy

There are a number of implications that can be taken from this study that represent themselves in terms of recommendations for practice and policy. First, it is clear that there are a number of studies used in this work that have helped to develop the knowledge of the Saudi response to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but all of these studies have not necessarily been able to fully understand and comprehend the complexities of the influence of both domestic and external factors in government decision-making in the area. Due to this, there has yet to be a comprehensive study on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, and this view has been enhanced by the limitations of the Subaltern Realism analysis of the foreign policy decision-making process.

Summary of Potential Impacts to Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia

This final section addresses the potential future impacts to the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, identifying the key challenges that may arise from the partial defence of Subaltern Realism that exists in this thesis. The study identified that Saudi Arabian foreign policy can be partially explained (and further enhanced) using the Subaltern Realism perspective. In this manner, it is necessary to understand how potential changes in the regional geopolitical status could help impact the foreign policy of the Saudi Arabian government. As outlined in this study, the most important feature of the Saudi Arabian foreign policy in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the role of the United States. The study acknowledged that historically, the role of the United States and the need to appease the foreign power has led to the Saudi Arabian foreign policy generally being focused towards peace,
rather than outward signs of aggression towards Israel. This has occasionally been rejected by Saudi Arabia, particularly during the Six Day War. However, for the most part, the United States has heavily influenced Saudi foreign policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The emergence of Saudi independence in terms of its foreign policy over the last decade has led to a slight change in the dynamic between the two countries. However, it is felt that the United States still has a high level of control over the country due to its military support. This is likely to increase as the Middle East becomes unstable, with the US becoming more involved in the attempt to win the War on Terror and to help protect Israel in the region. Therefore, it is most likely that the country will remain allies with the United States and that the push for peace in the conflict will continue to come from Saudi Arabia, to the anger of Iran. However, Saudi Arabian independence more recently in terms of its foreign policy will lead to changes in the relationship with the United States, with the country demanding a more equal relationship.

Finally, it is important to consider the internal aspects that influence on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. The liberal and conservative groups continue to grow apart in terms of their attitudes towards modernisation and peace with the West. This will continue to be a divisive point moving forwards. Therefore, the growing influence of either will depend heavily on those in power and the ability to inform foreign policy. It is most likely that the current situation continues, with both parties vying for power with neither gaining a majority. Despite this, from the Subaltern perspective it is clear that the influence of internal groups could be dramatic given the right circumstance and as the thesis has highlighted, this could be triggered by a slight change to the internal power of either group. From a Subaltern perspective, the situation can be analysed far more effectively than that of a traditional realist perspective, as it allows the discussion to take into account the influence of external powers and internal groups that pressurise a developing nations’ government in terms of its foreign policy. Currently, Saudi Arabia has emerged from the shadow of the United States and has dictated its own policy to a large extent over the past decade. However, the country still appears to be controlled by either external or internal forces that will decide how it approaches the Arab-Israeli conflict, underlining that the Subaltern perspective was suitable for this current analysis.
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ABC-CLIO. p. 596.


Appendices

Appendix A “Liberal Group”

Correspondences Form:

Question One

*When do you think the establishment of the liberal movement in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was, and why?*

Answers:

1) There is no clear approach of Saudi Liberalism within a clear approach and there are only views echoed by liberal intellectuals and writers.

2) Fifty years ago

3) The society in the past did not know anything about Liberalism and considered it as secularism and was only known post the Iraq invasion.

4) Liberal school has established decades ago. However, after the event of 9/11 and the failure of Islamic school liberal activists have become well known in Saudi Arabia

5) After several Saudis have been involved in terrorist attacks around the globe

6) After 9/11

7) I really do not know the exact time/date as I have only became a member of the liberal practice in 2006

8) Of course in 2001 after the failure of the extremist (religious) school. Why, simply because this group have spent years using our Islamic principles to deceive the citizens of Saudi Arabia. We have clear evidence of their corruptions in the judicial system, in education, in banking Operations.

9) After the involvement of young Saudis in different terrorist attacks. Why, apparently the whole world knew at the time that something was wrong. Why would a group of early age get involved in a stupid act like this? Its not our principles nor our believes. They have been used and brainwashed and we clearly blame the Islamic school and Matawa (conservatives) for this historical and shameful act.

10) In 1977, the Saudi Liberalism has been founded and its first aim was to fight against the extremist group of *Al Sahwa Al-Islamiyya*
11) Well, in 1988 I have been awarded a degree in Politics from Georgetown University. Since then, I have adopted liberalist thinking in my writing. I’m glad to see more journalists adopting liberalist principals in their writings but we still need to gain more understanding of Liberalism by teaching it in our educational system.

12) After the terrorist attacks in New York, more precisely by the end of 2001.

**Question Two**

*How different is the current Saudi liberal movement from Islamic forms of Liberalism?*

**Answers**

1) Liberalism cannot be broken down to different sizes. There is no difference.

2) Current Liberalism calls for freedom, democracy and reform, but Islamic Liberalism views freedom within limits of Islamic teachings.

3) There is no Islamic forms of Liberalism

4) It is all branches of Islamic school and Wahhabis principles.

5) Mainly, all conservatives are the same. Why does Saudi Arabia the only country in the world where women are not allowed to drive? Is it because we are the only Muslims in the planet? We do not have another forms of Islamic school, the conservatives are leading the government’s decision making and the government needs to realise that before it's too late.

6) They are the same ‘Two sides of the same coin’

7) Well, we are liberals and Muslims at the same time but not extremist.

8) I have never heard of this.

9) I knew few religious figures have been imprisoned for disagreeing with the government such as, Sheikh Aaidh Al Qarni and Dr Salman Al Ouda. However, with lack of Internet access and advanced communication system, at that time, we were unable to confirm any of these claims.

10) I heard this term before ‘Islamic Liberalism’ it is a famous secular perspective in Turkey but it does not
exist in Saudi.

11) Religion has nothing to do with Liberalism. We are Muslims and liberals.

12) In Saudi, the extremist ideas are not based on the well-known Islamic sources Quran and saying of prophet Mohamed ‘peace upon him’. However, these ideas are based on the concepts of Wahhabism and it will never change.

Question Three

Briefly, what distinguishes Liberalism- at the present time - from other movements such as Modernism and the Islamic school?

Answers:

1) Liberalism has started to spread widely and rapidly and been accepted by all kinds of modernist societies. It is distinct.

2) That Liberalism supports freedom of expression, restoration and disturb extremists who are the majority.

3) Supports Modernisation, unlike Islamic schools.

4) Its validity in every civilisation. Even in the Islamic society

5) Liberalism supports the idea of freedom by all means.

6) Freedom of speech

7) All kind of Freedom

8) To be Muslim without constraints.

9) Liberalism offers freedom and protects Human Rights.

10) All kind of freedom, even religious freedom.

11) Freedom of speech.

12) Liberalism allows you to choose your life, your religion and your believes.
Question Four

*In your opinion, what is the ideal model of Liberalism? And what country represents the ideal model of Liberalism, the United States or Britain or are there any others?*

**Answers**

1) Western World-US and Britain

2) Europe. Malaysia and Asia may come next

3) Europe

4) All western countries have known Liberalism for decades but as an Islamic example we have Turkey and Malaysia

5) Europe and the U.S.

6) Liberalist started in Europe but nowadays they are more powerful in the U.S

7) Europe, U.S, Malaysia

8) France and Italy

9) Europe

10) Participant has left this section blank

11) Europe

12) United Kingdom and the U.S.

Question Five

*What are the foundations and aims of the liberal movement in the Kingdom?*

**Answers**

1) Enlightenment and change. Inform Private and public rights and Escaping the box.
2) Basically, Liberalism grants freedom of thinking, reform, and limiting the power of extremists. Also, it
Insures safe sources for jobless and poorer class and apply women rights.

3) Freedom of Speech and Human Rights.

4) Informs liberty, equality and justice whether legal or social justice

5) Ensure Civil Rights and improve the press sector by allowing freedom of express. Moreover, the main aim
of liberalist is to develop and push the country forward into more developed state, “Why not” Saudi is a
member of the G20 and has plenty of economy sources.

6) Allows freedom of speech and thinking.

7) Freedom

8) Freedom and Human Rights

9) Main aim is to fight corruption and protect Saudi’s citizens from the abuse of power by extremist

10) Freedom of speech, support and protects the rights of the elderlies people, retirees, children, and prisoners.


12) Improve the following; Education system, Judicial System, Press sector, Economic, Human Rights.

**Question Six**

*Has the liberal doctrine accomplished any gains in the Kingdom, despite its freedom of expression being restricted
and it’s being under the constant criticism of the Islamic school?*

**Answers**

1) Achieved acceptance and rapid spread. Extremists accept Liberalism. Ability to express demands for
rights.

2) Freedom of opinion, freedom of thinking and freedom of practising away from the commandments
inherited is not the doctrine of Liberalism.

3) No tangible gains but the circle of supporters has grown and positive change of political decision.
4) The main achievement is becoming well known in Saudi Arabia

5) Saudis can consider Liberalism now as a better alternative of the Wahhabi’s concepts and ideas.

6) We did not have any great benefits yet but we will soon.

7) Knowing Liberalism is an achievement in itself.

8) Not yet.

9) Currently, Liberalism is well known, we need Saudis to decide and to stop extremists from ruling and taking control of our lives.

10) Ability to distinguish between real Islamic concepts and the fake Wahhabi’s believes.

11) No

12) We will not have any achievements as long as the Ulama and conservatives exist.

**Question Seven**

*Have you ever been subjected to any acts of harassment restricting your activities from members of other movements or from other public institutions? If the answer is yes, please describe.*

**Answers**

1) Yes. Threats of homicide and gun shot.

2) No.

3) I have spent two years in prison without charge.

4) Unfortunately, I did not know how powerful the conservatives are until the day when I had an argument with a religious figure and being arrested the next day.

5) Participant left this section blank.

6) My husband’s passport was reserved and he’s not authorised to travel.

7) Yes, two times by the government and 3 times by the religious police.
8) Yes but I do not think this is related to your research

9) No comment

10) Saudi society always condemns new opinions and believes but they will regret it on the long run.

11) I’m not allowed to travel outside the country for Five years.

12) No

Question Eight

*International relations and foreign policy is the area with which we are concerned. As a Liberal, how do you wish the Kingdom to proceed and be viewed in these areas?*

Answers

1) Sure, in human rights and women rights, political freedom, health, education and open up to the world.

2) Private freedom, freedoms of thought and get rid of fear of modernisation.

3) I think the kingdom should focus in the internal issues first.

4) First, we need to have another economic source then Saudi should find alternative for the U.S. because sooner or later Saudi will run out of oil and the U.S. will not have any interests by then.

5) I want to see Saudi like United Arab Emirates ‘less involvement in the region and more economic sources’.

6) The kingdom should improve its local arena first.

7) As a peacemaker.

8) Fully acceptance for Human Rights treaty.

9) To have and establish more relations in the globe.


11) Protect both private and public Human Rights.
12) Minimises the number of radical groups involved in its decision-making. In another word, Saudi should be better off without the absolute power of the Ulama and conservatives.

**Question Nine**

*The liberal movement has been known internationally for their demands of world peace and calling for the intended parties to resolve international disputes. Does this also apply to the liberal movement in the Kingdom, particularly in light of the fact that the Middle East has recently faced the race of armament from different countries?*

**Answers**

1) Yes there have been few attempts to convince the states of such demands but only few changes have been made.

2) Yes and we call for achieving peace and ban all kinds of weapons and disarmament.

3) As any nation we want peace

4) Peace is our main object

5) We are against all kind of violence and peace is our main target.

6) All members of the UN resolution should be united in fighting violation.

7) Saudi cannot force peace but we have great hopes in Obama’s doctrine.

8) Yes we support the UN resolutions

9) Liberalism is with the humanity and its existence and refuses racism or violence

10) We are against all kind of violence internally or internationally.

11) Iran should comply fully with the UN Resolution in regard the nuclear weapons.

12) Yes U.S. and Great Britain should stop the Iranian threat
Question Ten

Do you support establishing Saudi-Israeli relations? Why?

Answers

1) Yes. A citizen has a right to go wherever he desires.

2) No

3) Not diplomatic relations but Saudi can establish trade or commercial relations just like Qatar and UAE

4) Why not.

5) The history shows evidence on how Jews and Muslims used to live together in one city (Medina Munawara).

6) This is a tough question

7) No the land of the two holly mosques should never recognise Israel

8) Yes like Qatar and Egypt.

9) Yes, but this will never happen in authoritarian society like Saudi where freedom of expression is prohibited and women are not allowed to drive.

10) No.

11) I agree with establishing relations with Israel and Saudi has tried that in several occasions such as peace initiative in 2002 and in Riyadh Summit in 2007 but Israel is not willing to make new friends.

12) Of course not.
Question Eleven

*If the liberal movement was given a chance to change the current international condition of the Kingdom and to participate in decision making what would these decisions include and what would their objectives be, in your opinion?*

**Answers**

1) Women rights, education and accomplishing balance between extremists and reformists.

2) Reform and fighting financial corruption, bureaucracy and limiting the power of extremists.

3) Establish a system that would correspond with the demands of the international system. Including equality, justice and women rights.

4) Fight corruption

5) Liberals main aim is to develop into a political organisation

6) Key player in the Middle East.

7) Counter terrorism and secure the region.

8) Simply, to follow Western footsteps in developing the country

9) Apply Human Rights and solve the internal issues such as poverty and unemployment.

10) Become a well-developed state

11) Find a diplomatic solution to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and to have a balanced policy towards the West

12) Internally, Liberals would restrict all of the Ulama’s authorities and then will focus on developing the country.
Question Twelve

Which country poses the greatest threat to the Kingdom in the present time, Iran or Israel?

Answers

1) Iran.

2) Both

3) Radicals spread in the Kingdom and borders.

4) None

5) Iran

6) Shia

7) Iran, Hezbollah and Syria

8) Both Israel and Iran

9) Israeli is not threatening Saudi but Iran does

10) Iran and Russia

11) China, Iran, Russia and Yemen.

12) Iran

Question Thirteen

Finally, in your own opinion, what changes would you make within the Kingdom's international and domestic arenas?

Answers

1) In the international arena: An economic solution, which ends financial crisis, political resolution to end the conflict in Palestine by emerging Palestinians with Israelis in a federal unit and become one state.
2) To live in peace and the Kingdom should improve and develop the industrial sector, agricultural, educational and economic arenas.

3) Unity between the peoples of the world.

4) Insure and apply Human Rights treaty.

5) Allow freedom of expression.

6) To provide more jobs for students whom recently granted their degrees and to solve the problem of poverty among the lower class.

7) Allow political parties and the election for the members of *Shura* Council.

8) Allow critical writings and improve the judicial system.

9) Allow all sort of freedom

10) Improve the health care and allow more freedom

11) Prevent the legislature authority (*Ulama*) from getting involve in our lives and to immediately limit the power of ‘Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice’ (CPVPV)

12) The government should recognise liberals and allow more and allow
Appendix B “Islamic School”

Correspondences Form:

Question One

Is it possible for the, liberal and the Islamic schools to meet in political reformative efforts in the domestic and international arenas?

Answers

1) No it is impossible as we have completely different objectives

2) This is impossible. Liberalism is a Western concept and it is not applicable in (our) Islamic society

3) Most of liberalist calls for woman rights and freedom however, Islam, since its birth, has applied these concepts and the society would rather follow Islamic concepts

Question Two

In your opinion, who represents the real media today: liberals or conservatives? in other words, who would you rely on?

Answers

1) Conservatives, since Liberals support Westernisation and are blinded by the idea of democracy and women's freedom although the West themselves do not respect women as we do in Islam.

2) This is a conservative society and will never accept other than Islamic resources.

3) Conservatives
Question Three

What is your opinion of recent school curriculum? Does it contradict Islamic principles?

Answers

1) I believe that the government has done a good job in formulating school curriculum in general and we still supervise the curriculum to make sure it does not contradict Islamic principles.

2) Shameful to Islam and would destroy the younger generation.

3) The Ulama knows better

Question Four

Is it possible for the current liberal trend to exist in line with the so-called Islamic Liberalism or is it impossible?

Answers

1) No, as I said Liberals have completely different objectives against Islamic teachings.

2) This will never happen.

3) King Abdul-Aziz has established and united the country of Saudi Arabia on Islamic principles but those liberals are working to dismantle and demolish the unity of Saudi’s nation.

Question Five

Some members of the Liberalism school of thought have accused some of you of being aggressive and stated that some of your members have been harassing them to the point where they have considered them as infidels. What is your comment on that?

Answers

1) We do not harass any liberals unless they commit an offence against the religion. It is the government's duty to fight any form of action against Islam, as Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state, which follows the Islamic laws. Any actions, which might offend Islam, shall not be tolerated and it's our responsibility to
protect the people from the dangers of Liberalism and Westernised ideas, which aim to destroy Islam.

2) We do not want Western ideas among us on the land of the two holy mosques.

3) Then, they should find another country to live in but this is a conservative society and will remain the same.

Question Six

In terms of the international level, how do you wish the Kingdom to be viewed? Do you wish it to be viewed as a religious state or a liberal state, which combines religion and knowledge, as is the case in Turkey and Malaysia, for example?

Answers

1) I believe the Kingdom is already viewed as an Islamic state, which is also modernised and developed. Islam supports knowledge as long as it complies with Islam.

2) Saudi has established as an Islamic country and it will remain Islamic state.

3) Islamic state, securer to the holly lands and protector to the other Islamic nations around the globe.

Question Seven

What is your opinion of the Arab-Israeli conflict? Do you support peace and establishing relations with Israel?

Answers

1) No, we shall not accept any relations with Israelis as they have killed millions of Palestinians and stolen their lands. Israelis should return the stolen lands and the Israeli state should not be recognised internationally.

2) We have nothing against Judaism but Zionists should leave Palestine.

3) Stealing is a sin in all religions even Islam, which requires cutting off hand.
Question Eight

Several Liberals support establishing relations with Israel and they claim that Palestinians themselves have already established such relations, so why would we refuse to do the same? What do you think of such claim and does it contradict with the Islamic law?

Answers

1) Liberals are controlled by the foreign media and aim to enforce alien traditions and ideas to our Islamic society. I don't believe that Palestinians want peace with Israel, or we would not have seen the way they suffer in the media.

2) Saudi will never accept any relations with Israeli and the Palestinians are in a weak position, it does not necessary mean they are pleased with this relation but they need to survive.

3) Neither Saudi nor Palestine will have a relation with Israeli

Question Nine

Do the internal currents whether liberal or Islamic affect the decision-making regarding foreign policy in the Kingdom? If yes how?

Answers

1) Yes indeed. We discuss all issues with King Abdulla and he never hesitates to take prompt action as he cares so much about the people and the interest of the state. Also, the King never tolerated any ideas or action against the religion from either side.

2) Definitely, the government must consider all the internal issues before taking any decision

3) The members and scholars of the Ulama ‘of course under the supervision of the king’ will guide the government in achieving its goals.