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ALHARBI, MOHAMMED, ABDULLAH, N

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**School of Government and International Affairs**

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**Saudi Arabia and Communism During the Cold War**

**“King Faisal’s Foreign Policy Towards the Soviet Union: 1962-1975”**

**Mohammed Abdullah N Alharbi**

**A Thesis submitted for a degree of Doctorate in Middle Eastern Studies**

**School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA)**

**Durham University**

**March 2017.**

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines "Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards Communism during the Cold War: King Faisal 's foreign policy with the Soviet Union, 1962-1975." The goal of this project is to further our understanding of Saudi diplomacy towards Soviet communism during the Cold War. Drawing on a broad range of archival and published sources in Arabic and English, such as government papers, books and articles, this study investigates different attitudes and policies that shaped Saudi Arabian policy in containing Communism around its zenith in the Middle East in the 1960s and 1970s.

Focusing on built strategies of fighting Communism; the policy process was also framed as a struggle against secular nationalism movements and hence Islamic diplomacy became a fundamental motivation for action. These were key features of Saudi policy during the Cold War and were utilized in an effort to mobilize domestic actors in Saudi Arabia. My thesis thus pays special attention to key characteristic of "encirclement syndrome" that enables a systematic assessment of this study. The thesis's main argument is that Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s fought Communism on all fronts as the results of wider political and religious factors, rather than the actions of an individual ruler or country.

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

<b>ADST</b>	The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
<b>ARAMCO</b>	Arabian American Oil Company (Formally now 'Saudi Aramco')
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
<b>DMA</b>	Dārat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz – (cf. King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives)
<b>FCO</b>	The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (the Foreign Office)
<b>FOIA</b>	The Freedom of Information Act
<b>FRUS</b>	Foreign Relations of the United States
<b>JKFL</b>	John F. Kennedy Presidential Library
<b>IJMES</b>	International Journal of Middle East Studies
<b>IUM</b>	The Islamic University of Medina.
<b>NARA</b>	National Archives and Record Administration
<b>NIA</b>	National Intelligence Estimate
<b>NGO</b>	Non- Governmental Organization
<b>NSF</b>	National Security Files
<b>OIC</b>	Munẓẓamat al-mū'tamar al-islāmā (c.f the Organization of Islamic Conference).
<b>PREM</b>	Prime Minster Office Records
<b>PRO</b>	Public Record Office (The National Archives)
<b>UAR</b>	United Arabic Republic
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>WML</b>	Rabṭat al 'alm al-islāmī (cf. World Muslim League)

### **Statement of Copyright**

“The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.”

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### **A note on Transliteration, Translation and References**

In my thesis, when I cited Arabic sources and common Arabic terms and place names I have tried to use the forms in the Oxford Dictionary of English. All translations of books from Arabic to English are my own. Citations broadly follow the notes and bibliography citation style in the *Chicago manual of style*.

## Chapter 1

### - Introduction

Following the formal establishment of the Saudi Monarchy by king Abdul-Aziz otherwise known as “Ibn Saud” in 1932, Saudi Arabia’s adventurous and at times callous foreign policy seized the attention of the world. From spearheading the Islamic waves across the region to fighting Arab nationalism and communism, Saudi decision-makers left no shortage of fodder for scholars. Yet, Abdul-Aziz’s death did not signify a great change in Saudi foreign policy. It was Faisal, the King of the Saudi Monarchy, who enabled Saudi Arabia’s policy to enter the world political arena. During King Faisal’s reign of 1962-1975,<sup>1</sup> Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy merited little attention. While the following the thirteen years witnessed major shifts in the domestic, regional and international spheres it will be argued here that Saudi Arabia’s current foreign policy stance was forged in

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<sup>1</sup> In my research, I follow a few official documents, scholars and political historians who put the formal beginning of Faisal’s tenure even earlier than his “official date” 1964, stating that ‘Faisal ruled Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the 1960s, See for example: PRO, FC 371/163006 (BS 1011/1), ‘Annual Review of Saudi Arabia 1961’, 6 March, 1962; Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985) Sarah Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia: The Struggle between King Sa’ud and Crown Prince Faisal, 1953-1962*, (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1997); Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America’s Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981). Further, for a few also the assertion of his position within the Royal family can be tracked down to 1958 when he started to assume significant responsibility uncontested, as stated by Anthony Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold: The Story of Aramco and the Saudi Kings* (Mifflin: Houghton, 1999); Mordechai Abir, *Oil, Power and Politics: Conflict in Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf* (London: Frank Cass, 1974). Hence, Faisal’s political role in my work starts from the beginning of the 1960s.



1962.<sup>2</sup> Writing in 1970, Robert Sullivan postulated, "Saudi Arabian foreign policy prior to 1962 was inconsistent and even haphazard because Saudi Arabia had no key functional role in an equilibrated state system. In 1962 Saudi policy gained the systemic context, which clearly defined its function as that of the conservative great power in conflict with radical outside powers, primarily Nasser's Egypt."<sup>3</sup>

As such, Faisal A. Hafiz posited in 1980 that this also holds true with respect to the formulation of foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite the potency of this argument, it is contended that while security was -and remains- the catalyst of major foreign policy shifts, it was fighting the forces of Communism and Zionism that was the primary determinant of Saudi foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Given this fact, Saudi Arabia was able to enter the international alliance, which integrated the country in an indirect manner into the Cold War against the USSR and consolidated Saudi policy and to a certain extent the Arab policy orientation against the communist-Arab nationalist identity. This last point was not clearly perceived by politicians and historians. This misperception led to a very distorted stance and because of this has received surprisingly little attention and discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> David Long considers the architect of the worldview policy which still predominates in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy decision-making today to be the late King Faisal. See: David E. Long, "King Faisal World View, in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Willard A. Beling. (London: Croom Helm, 1982.), 174.

<sup>3</sup> Robert R. Sullivan, "Saudi Arabia in International Politics." *The Review of Politics* 32 (1970), 433.

<sup>4</sup> Faisal A. Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Foreign policy Behavior 1964-1975: A Study of the Underlying Factors and Determinations" (PhD diss., The University of Nebraska, 1980), 53-57.

Beyond this, however, Soviet policies in the Arab Gulf states and in particular Saudi Arabia, as the fulcrum of these states, has seldom been the subject of more comment and speculation. Mark Katz pointed rightly to this fact in his book "Russia and Arabia", which posited that, "while there is heightened concern over Soviet influence in the Arabian Peninsula, relatively little research has been done on actual Soviet foreign policy toward this vital region, and there has been little discussion of the opportunities and constraints Moscow faces in extending its influence there."<sup>5</sup> Naturally, this may be explained in part by the end of the Cold War and the onset of U.S. hegemony and influence in the region. Consequently the Saudi diplomatic history towards the USSR in the Cold War does not occupy a central place in the modern diplomatic history of the Cold War nor in the field of foreign policy. In a diplomatic sense and to many specialists, Saudi Arabia had had no formal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union despite the considerable increase in importance of the USSR in the Middle East since the Czech-Egyptian arms sales of 1955.<sup>6</sup>

As William quoted from [ Jean- Louis Soulie and Lucien Champenois] King Faisal explained in 1963 that "if we have no relations with the USSR and its satellites it is simply because between them and us there is an irrevocable doctrinal incompatibility. Saudi Arabia vehemently opposed the expansion of Soviet influence on the publicly stated grounds that Islamic states must oppose atheism,

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<sup>5</sup> Mark N. Katz, Preface, *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> William. Ochsenwald, "Saudi Arabia And the Islamic Revival," *International Journal of the Middle East* 13 (1981): 275-76.

the official doctrine of the USSR.”<sup>7</sup> The CIA referred to the Saudi attitude to Communism in 1960 with “the Saudi government denied establishing diplomatic relations with Communist states and Communists nationals rarely enter the country.”<sup>8</sup> To this end, Saudi’s disturbance over the Soviet presence in some Arab countries was the underlying reason for the country’s preoccupation with Communism as basic to Saudi Foreign Policy, accounting for its close relationship with the West.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Saudi foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s essentially towards the USSR remained under-explored and should be examined in the context of social, political and regional changes within the Saudi state. The analysis here should also examine the scope of Islamic diplomacy that featured in Saudi policies in the Cold War that requiring understanding of the dynamics and evolution of the state policy towards communism. Most obvious is that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, for the first time in the recent history of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy, utilized Islamic ideologies to pursue the interest of Saudi Arabia and to counter the wildfire-like spread of the radical Marxist-Socialist ideology in the Middle East at that time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 275-77.

<sup>8</sup> CIA, , FOIA (CREST), Document Number, CIA-RDP79-00891A001300080001, “Saudi Arabia Handbook”, IV-1/2 December 1, 1972, At <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00891A001300080001-1.pdf> (Accessed 29 February 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Nizar Madani, “The Islamic Content of the Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia: *King Faisal’s Call of Islamic Solidarity* 1965-1975”(PhD diss., The American University Washington D.C, 1977), 54.

<sup>10</sup> Only recently, Stephane Lacroix has argued that, (Fsyal) “Faisal understood the necessity of surrounding the ideological arena to a master of propaganda like Nasser. He had to make Islam, the Kingdom’s chief symbolic resource into a counter ideology but was quite incapable of engaging in political debate of this

Accordingly, "Saudi Arabia developed an appropriate ideology but, in contrast to Nasser's Egypt, where ideology often appeared to be the reason for policy, in Saudi Arabia's case it was clearly a minor tool of foreign policy."<sup>11</sup> In this context, "Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s did not become so obsessed with a belief in the superiority of its way of life or so convinced that Nasser's radical ideology really was the end toward which Egypt bent its efforts that it undertook a foreign policy designed to roll back Arab radicalism."<sup>12</sup> In the style of a true conservative state, "Saudi Arabia acted much more than it spoke, and its actions were for the most part constantly defensive."<sup>13</sup>

In the words of Hafiz, "Faisal sought to promote Arab solidarity, not through the confines of Arab revolutionary nationalism, but rather through the broader perspective of Muslim solidarity."<sup>14</sup> This argument may be strengthened by saying Saudi Arabia sought to achieve Islamic unity by political means through mobilizing the Muslim countries as a counterpoise to Arab nationalism in the Middle East and Communism in the entire World.<sup>15</sup> Crucially, only confidence in

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magnitude". See Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, trans. George Holoch (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 41. In fact, despite the use of a pro-Islamic identity as a policy of the Saudi state during Faisal's era failing, as Stephane argued, this policy actually somehow strengthened Faisal's aim and the Saudi state by adopting an Islamic solidarity which had not been previously subjected.

<sup>11</sup> Sullivan, "Saudi Arabia in International politics." (1970), 438.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Foreign policy." (1980), 55.

<sup>15</sup> In this respect Gregory Gause III refers to James Piscatori who considered in his book " *Islam in a World of Nation States*", Saudi Arabia's conception of its Islamic leadership role as perfectly compatible with its strong ties to the United States, something that more radical Muslim thinkers would see as completely incompatible. See Gregory Gause III, "The foreign policy of Saudi Arabia," in *The*

a specific political ideology and blind faith were the paramount concerns of Saudi policy and in particular on the communist threat.

In this context, the Russian historian, who witnessed King Faisal's time, Alex Vassiliev, has tried to make his argument of Islam a crucial factor in Saudi policy in making the threat definition and alliance responses easier to follow when he analyzed the factors that led to the foundation of the Islamic bloc. According to him, "the influence of Islam had never died out, even in such secular and relatively westernized states as Turkey."<sup>16</sup> Vassiliev developed this further and outlined, "Although the ideational factor of pan-Islam has posed a severe threat to western governments, Washington and London, which traditionally treated religion as an obstacle to the spread of socialist and communist ideas, adopted a positive attitude to Faisal's initiative."<sup>17</sup> Besides, the most striking and unusual aspects of Saudi foreign policy since World War II have been largely the result of religious attitudes plus the conservative nature of the king, which had evolved considerably from the 1960s. Following this line of reasoning, King Faisal reordered Saudi Arabia's religiosity priorities, placing it within policy formation.

A glance at Faisal's policy vision, for example, revealed that he had a religious background, reflecting the influence of religious institutions, which were attributed to his policy and gave Faisal and Saudi Arabia another crucial advantage over its Arab rivals. All in all, that Islamic identity and ideology were

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*Foreign Policies of the Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner: 2002), 203.

<sup>16</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The history of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Book, 2000), 386.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

key elements to understanding Saudi policy with the USSR where mixing religion and politics was a tool of the country doctrine. This was a tendency better described as “the current modus vivendi system or symbiotic relationship between Ulama and State, part of a multifaceted system governing state-society relations termed “Faisal’s order.”<sup>18</sup>

As Kissinger put it “Faisal combined religious intensity and diplomatic shrewdness- not for nothing had he been Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia for years before ascending to the throne. Religion gave him the inner strength to face Saudi Arabia’s perils and seek to overcome them with serenity. It also provided cohesion to a country moving, however fitfully, toward modernization, as well as protection against the covetous.”<sup>19</sup>

Tim Niblock framed that “the state was more active in projecting the Islamic dimension in foreign policy and in guiding the religious sector domestically.”<sup>20</sup> Faisal’s political sophistication was evidenced by his maintenance of a delicate balance of power with the USA and the western countries, and his strong conviction that Zionism and communism were two sides of the same coin, examples of which were reflected in the country’s foreign policy attitudes. <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Joshua Teitelbaum, Holier Than Thou “ *Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Opposition*, (Washington D.C: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, policy Paper, 2000), 17.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years Of Upheaval* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, 1982), 662

<sup>20</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (London: Routledge, 2006), 47.

<sup>21</sup> Yet since Faisal’s death Saudi Arabia has been able to pursue a more conciliatory policy toward the semi-communist regime in South Yemen which

This was a tough balancing act, but one which Faisal had done relatively successfully with his masterly use of “the carrot-and-stick approach and the traditionally pervasive religious Wahhabi framework.”<sup>22</sup>

However, it would be misleading and reductionist to attempt to explain and portray Saudi Arabia’s attitude towards the USSR’s ambition by referring solely to religious factors. Security and political concerns were of great importance because they had a direct bearing on Saudi officials’ perceptions of their primary interest. These included Saudi Arabia’s strategic policies in the Arabian Peninsula and the vulnerability of pro-U.S. Middle Eastern and Islamic regimes to a revolutionary assault or Communist threat.

Moreover, because of the distance between the USSR and the Arabian Peninsula, the risk of wider conflict with the U.S. and the uncertain prospects for success, a direct Soviet invasion of the Peninsula did not seem likely.<sup>23</sup> Attacking the Arabian Peninsula might lead to a wider superpower conflict and Saudi Arabia would not support such a direct confrontation with the USSR.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Stephen Walt advocated that “given the limited capabilities and numerous internal and external vulnerabilities of the country, its foreign policy has been largely

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Faisal declared an anathema. See Peter Mansfield, *The new Arabians* (New York: J.G. Ferguson, 1981), 102.

<sup>22</sup> This phrase is borrowed from: Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia: the Formative Years* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Sullivan argued that ‘Saudi Arabia is not especially active in political conflicts taking place in states beyond those in her borders, mainly because their outcomes cannot affect her vital interest.’ See: Sullivan, “*Saudi Arabia in International Politics*.” (1970), 439.

defensive and reactive.”<sup>25</sup> Following Walt's lead, Gerges wrote on Saudi Arabia in the Cold War, “to compensate for his regional weakness, Saudi rulers looked outside particularly, toward the United States for help.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, no analysis can avoid the conclusion that understanding the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia towards the USSR is important as its legacy still remains of paramount significance to present Saudi policy. Certainly, much has been written about U.S. interest in Saudi Arabia, American foreign policy toward this country, superpower rivalries in the area and the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, very little is known about the perspective of Saudi foreign policy toward the Soviet Union on all aspects of communism, which remain unexplored or, to be more accurate, have received insufficient attention.

Alongside my central theme in this dissertation, I cannot avoid writing about the United States' position as the powerful external actor in the region, the clear enemy of the USSR on the global stage and the most powerful ally to Saudi Arabia to date.<sup>27</sup> True, the United States played an important role in fighting the communists and supporting its allies who were anti-communist in the region.<sup>28</sup> For almost six decades America's relationship with Saudi Arabia has been the main pillar of its Middle East policies.

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<sup>25</sup> Walt, *The origins of Alliance* (1987), 56.

<sup>26</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 153.

<sup>27</sup> Bin Hethlain considers the period from 1962-1979 of Saudi- US relations as being shaped by King Faisal's strategy. Even after the King's death in 1975, the line of policy that he had developed continued to mold the relationship. See: Naif bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962: Allies in Conflict* (London: Saqi, 2010), 31.

<sup>28</sup> Gerges has argued that in Faisal's visit to the US in 1962, he considered his friendships with the US to be the cornerstone of his policy. See Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics: 1955-1976* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1994), 154.



To gain a sense of the paramount importance of the alliance, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to recall the conclusion of a book on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia by Jacob Goldberg. After analyzing and reviewing a great deal of hypotheses about Saudi's foreign policy in the formative years, he made an interesting point. He concluded "the absence of anti-Western feelings, combined with the fact that Saudi Arabia has no legacy of western occupation, had an impact on other features of the kingdom besides its foreign policy. The absence of anti-Western legacy also accounts in all probability for the fact that it is much easier for Saudi Arabia than the rest of the Arab World to cultivate close relations with the U.S."<sup>29</sup>

As a result, the Saudi role in U.S. international policies became even more vital with the beginning of the Cold War, being strategically located between three continents over which the U.S. and the USSR competed. Less affected by European colonialism and less populated than its neighbors, Saudi Arabia was an ideal ally in times of global tension. It can easily be assumed that the deterrent effect of strong links with the US played a significant role in enabling Saudi Arabia to have benefited from this alliance immensely.<sup>30</sup>

However, the extent of the security assistance given to Saudi Arabia has not always produced a linear subservience to the US's foreign policy aims. Saudi Arabia made the decision to use the Oil Weapon (Oil Embargo 1973), which remained a case in point.

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<sup>29</sup> Jacob, *The Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986), 184.

<sup>30</sup> William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1981), 2.

As such, it is perhaps inaccurate to describe the Saudi relationship with the United States as falling entirely within a traditional patron-client paradigm, even if the structure of the relationships between Riyadh and Washington immunized the Saudis to a large extent from great-power leverage in the international system.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst Saudi and the U.S. had a shared interest in fighting the USSR during the period under examination, they had differed over the right approach, especially when it came to regional stability and Israeli security, and there were still disagreements.<sup>32</sup> These differences were partly acknowledged by their different interpretation of their goal.<sup>33</sup> In this way, as Weldon Matthews rightly put it, “historians of the Cold War have produced an important corpus of work investigating how the United States cultivated working relationships with anti-

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen Walt's analysis about Saudi-US relations since World War II and his apt result that “neither country has been able to wield much leverage over the other” has been reiterated in countless works through a chain of Western scholars, thereby becoming one of the fundamental postulates on which the study of Saudi political history is based. See: Stephen M. Walt, *The origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 235.

<sup>32</sup> While, the Saudis had a tendency to back conservative and west- oriented regimes, the US were more passionate about promoting reforms. That is what actually occurred between King Faisal and the Kennedy Administration and will be explained more distinctly in the third chapter during the War in Yemen.

<sup>33</sup> The conventional wisdom says: the relationships between the Saudi Royal Family and the U.S. during the Cold War relied on shared interests not values. It is no secret to scholars specializing in the Saudi field that the U.S. and the Saudi Royal family cut a deal that stipulates: the U.S. will always stay out of the internal affairs of Saudi and provide them a security umbrella against any threat they may face. In return, Saudis should support the U.S. interest in matters of war (Anti-communism for example), security and with equal frankness, to give money to the U.S. whenever needed. Yet, for more arguments to this effect see: David Long, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies*, (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1985).

communist but illiberal regimes in the region.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, despite their difference of objectives, Saudi has nonetheless proven a key ally for U.S. policy in the region, even if the U.S. still partly exerted its political influence behind the scenes to secure global security and the overriding compulsion was to deny the Communist bloc access to the free world’s oil supplies at whatever cost, as Moiara described it.<sup>35</sup>

Pointedly, scholars have recently questioned the extent to which Saudi policy-makers in the 1960s and 1970s were bound by Islamic solidarity and unity in dealing with the Cold War and the USSR. Moreover, indications that Saudi Arabia was beginning to open up the political sphere have proven false dawns. King Faisal, moreover, was praised by many commentators for his apparent embrace of a more transparent system during his period, when popular economic reforms were implemented in 1962 to put the Saudi state back on track.<sup>36</sup> At least in reference to these reforms “were basically conservative and its primary goals were to ensure the continued rule of the House of Sa’ud and improve the standard of living of the populace.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Weldon C. Matthews, “The Kennedy Administration: Counterinsurgency, and Iraq’s First Ba’thist Regime,” *International Journal of the Middle East* 43 (2011): 635.

<sup>35</sup> Moiara de M Ruehsen, “The Advent of American Hegemony in the Persian-Arabian Gulf” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1992), 4-6.

<sup>36</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006); 88-90; Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999); 260-266; John A. Shaw and David E. Long, *Saudi Arabian Modernization: The Impact of Change on Stability* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 1-11; As ‘ad AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism, and Global Power* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 95-99; Sultān. S al Fāiṣāl, *Malikan Fī Fikr Ummāh* (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Turāth, 1976), 22-48; Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1993), 85-99.

<sup>37</sup> PRO, FO 371/163008, (1015) ‘Saudi Arabia: Internal political situation’, 17 December, 1962; Sarah Yizraeli, *Politics and Society in Saudi Arabia: The Crucial*

Even if Washington welcomed the 1962 changes merely because “Saudi Arabia’s deterioration could invite domestic instability and Soviet penetration.”<sup>38</sup> Tim Niblock provides a useful qualification when he writes, “the threat to the political survival of Al Saud, and the steadily rising oil revenues, had created conditions in which the state’s political leadership could set the agenda for the country’s development.”<sup>39</sup> On several occasions, while the Saudi kings remained reticent to make politically risky reforms the delivery of steady economic growth had been the Saudi king’s main accolade.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, for the period 1962-1975 Saudi Arabia had become a prime mover in inter Arab policies and strategies, and a major cornerstone in deciding much of the blueprint for joint Arab policies and strategies.<sup>41</sup> Keeping in mind the above criteria, it is then my objective in this study to shed some more light on the topic and conduct an original study of this subject. In doing so, it is now feasible to draw attention to the statement of my research.

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*Year of Years of Development 1960-1982* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012), 116.

<sup>38</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 84.

<sup>39</sup> Niblock, *Saudi Arabia* (2006), 47.

<sup>40</sup> Yizraeli, *Politics and Society in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 115.

<sup>41</sup> Hafiz, “Changes in Saudi Arabia Foreign policy.” (1980), 70.

## **The statement of this research**

This research is undertaken in an attempt to advance understanding of a very complex and multifarious policy. I acknowledge this, and move forward with resolve, albeit cautious and with more than a trace of apprehension. This research looks at Saudi foreign policy toward communism from 1962-1975, necessarily depending on a wealth of historical knowledge that develops a critique of Saudi diplomatic history by focusing on the foreign policy challenges during the Cold War. The task of this study is to dissect the process of foreign policy analytically, and then to suggest what policy formation theory fits best.

However, this study not only seeks to contribute to Saudi policy literature on the late twentieth century, but also wishes to edify the crossroads on which pragmatism with religion were intertwined rudiments of Saudi international politics. Accordingly, to capture the complexity of this study is to look into the internal political threat from Communism and the growing influence of the USSR in depth and then focus on the ramifications of decision outcomes as indicators of foreign policy change. Taking this into account, the term “Saudi foreign policy” is not used here in its standard contemporary meaning, owing to the subject and the period under consideration.<sup>42</sup> Rather, Goldberg argued, “the Saudis had a patriarchal society and highly personalized way of making decision. Though the term is modern, the Saudi usage is highly traditional.”<sup>43</sup> As Gerd Nonneman indicated, “the personal reputation the ruler, charisma and patronage remain

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<sup>42</sup> Goldberg, *The Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986),4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

central in modern Saudi Arabia policy.”<sup>44</sup> In this context then, the analysis of personalitiy and motivations of the Saudi Arabian king towards the USSR is important in relation to foreign policy output throughout the Cold War. Whilst the need to balance competing opportunities and threats predominates, the psychological context of the decision maker merits scholarly attention and may account for a degree of variance in policy that assumptions of rationalism take for granted. To put it another way, this analysis will seek to substantiate the argument that the primacy of the security and “legitimacy in the domestic sphere, including the authenticity of religion,” remained recurrent.

In its empirical part, this work provides a detailed perspective on how Saudi policy in the Cold War developed towards the USSR. In doing so, this work demonstrates that many of the policies that we normally associate with Saudi Arabia actually began under Faisal’s regime. One of the aims of this dissertation is to underscore importance of illustrating a comprehensive pattern of behavior in the domestic, regional and global arenas of Saudi Arabia in the Cold War.

More specifically, this study seeks to establish patterns that provide us with an important basis for testing explanations of Saudi policies in the Cold War and towards the Soviet Union. My objective in this study is not to compete with nor emphasize on the narratives of modern Saudi Arabian history in the Cold War, but rather to understand the diplomatic history of Saudi Arabia in stressing the

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<sup>44</sup> Gerd Nonneman, “Determining and Patterns of Saudi Foreign Policy: ‘Omnibalancing’ and Relative Autonomy’ in Multiple Environments,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Gerd Nonneman and Paul Arts (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 320.

importance of dealing with external powers that greatly affected the domestic and regional influence of Riyadh. The aforementioned above will be in line with my analysis of Saudi official discourses in the 1960s and 1970s, which forming one of the objectives of this study; is to understand diplomatic history through intellectual Saudi contemporary history, which lies at the root of governmental policy and underscores an additional pattern in providing legitimacy for state policy.

Thus, the goal of this longitudinal study is twofold: first, to analytically comprehend the process of Saudi Arabia in the Cold War then determine whether Saudi Arabia, from 1962-1975 when Faisal was king, pursued a different foreign policy from other Saudi kings toward the Soviet Union. Second, it is hoped to explain the possible implications of Saudi attitude towards Moscow in the regional and local environment. This would uncover the nature of the Saudi stance towards Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt and Yemen as a function of dealing with the USSR. With these broader questions on the horizon, this project is devoted to analysis of Saudi policy towards the USSR regarded as an attempt to make comprehensive the nature and dynamics of anti-communism from the Saudi angle.

It is therefore the years of King Faisal's tenure that were chosen for this study since this period marked a demonstrable transition in Saudi foreign policy for the first time. Narrowing the scope of study further, this project will deal with Faisal's foreign policy with communism, namely the Soviet Union from 1962-1975. Admittedly, there are a few underlying threads to the events of this

period, which deserve some attention. Indeed, in my research thus far, I have been unable to find a single comprehensive study of Saudi foreign policy toward the Soviet Union 1962-1975.

Moreover, previous research has not addressed important questions, which are central in this study. This thesis identifies key historical circumstances and steps through which the notion of Political Islam took shape and expanded in this time, with the policy towards the USSR as a primary justification for the policy orientation. Thus, I suggest one of the main elements is to understand the experience of Saudi policy in the Cold War as a process of interpenetration of personality and faith. This project highlights the importance of Saudi's rigorous stance on Arab nationalism and what sort of the interrelationship between Arab nationalist movements and Communism were perceived.

In this vein, I investigate the ways in which Saudi Arabia conceived and described its policy standpoint on the Soviet Union in the Arab and Islamic World in order to dissuade them from establishing ties. The relevance of this study to the understanding of the changes in Saudi domestic scope that were influenced by state foreign policy towards Communism is unquestionable. Accordingly, religious internal factors in the state concepts of foreign policy have to be examined closely to answer the questions of this research.

What is more, this dissertation seeks to explain how and why Saudi's role succeeded or failed in constructing the platform of values and political goals with the Arab and Muslim countries that secured state the approval of its aggressive



policy towards the USSR. In this connection, this thesis examines the ways in which Saudi policy utilized the sizable minority of Muslims in the USSR, and whether it used this impulse successfully or not.

Additionally, this work highlights the persistent role that the conservative people ('Ulama) in Saudi Arabia played at that time in undermining the Soviet policy in the Muslim World. In this sense, it reveals the policy of anti- Communism of 1962-1975 empowering the hardline conservatives and how religious policy gradually developed within the state to become the main figure during Faisal's time. Yet, it explores how Islamic diplomacy became inextricably linked to Saudi policy when it came to dealing with the USSR within this policy.

I take into consideration the ideological conflicts between Islam and Communism, which reflected diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and the USSR. I will pay attention to Communism from the Saudi Arabian leadership's lens and this will enable me to have a clear understanding when portraying Saudi policy, which was seen as a "counter-revolution movement" against those upheavals throughout the region. This study asks further, was there any consensus within Saudi foreign policy regarding the compatibility between Islam and Communism? Or did cultural and religious differences influence Saudi decision makers' diagnosis of communist revivalism? This, therefore, will lead us to another question: Was Saudi Arabia reluctant to make ties with the USSR to quell internal opposition amongst Saudi Arabia's "Saudi Communists and nationalists " who supported Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir , the USSR policy in the region and shaped a threat to the regime? Or was it a response to the demands of the

country's most powerful international ally, mainly the US? Or can we understand state policy in regard to the USSR, since the USSR was proclaiming pro-revolutionary ideas in the Arab World, and what made Riyadh gravely concerned about the USSR?

My research would not be comprehensive, however, if I neglected other factors such as regime type and traditional relations with the U.S. Why, for example, was the reaction of Saudi Arabia more hostile toward the USSR after the 1967 war than that of the U.S. the staunchest ally of Israel? Was it a matter of regime stability? Or was it simply a matter of tradition since Saudi Arabia has always maintained a pro-western orientation in its foreign policy? Part of this study is an attempt to deal with the question of variations in Saudi policy toward the superpowers. Whereas the Soviet Union allegedly supported the Arab states against Israel, what factors account for such a variation in response toward it?<sup>45</sup> Additionally, was Saudi political posturing limited to Soviet policy in the Middle East, of which Egypt was its principal surrogate? Or was it a strong stance against Soviet policy on the global stage? How did Saudi Arabia conceive USSR power?

In the same vein, I have to deal with a further fundamental question: If the Kremlin knew of the deficiencies of the Arab armies in their wars with Israel, why wouldn't Moscow participate or stand by its allies to gain credence among

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<sup>45</sup> Soviet propaganda preferred to ignore the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict had originated from the collision of two cases of nationalism and from the dispute between two peoples over one piece of territory. See, *Alexei Vassiliev, Trans., Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism* (Ithaca Press, Reading: 1993), 65.

the Arab states, in particular with Saudi Arabia after the oil embargo and the rift which occurred with the most important and historical Saudi ally the, the US?

All the above questions and inquires herein will be answered in order to illustrate the main features of Saudi Arabia's policy towards the USSR, with special focus given to Faisal's time of 1962-1975. Therefore, to reiterate, the purpose of this study is to make a contribution to this hitherto neglected area by providing an analytical study, with reference to the underlying principles and enabling factors on the ground. In this sense, this study sheds light on the international relations of the late twentieth century and remains an analysis of Saudi policies towards the USSR. Hence, it is hoped to be a must-read for students of Saudi diplomatic history and those who are looking to understand the factors that drove Saudi strategic thinking and mistrust of the USSR throughout the Cold War.

**Literature Review:**

Despite the substantial input into the debate of Saudi Arabian academic writing, little academic analysis has been produced on the country's contemporary history in the Cold War. Whilst scholars have by no means respectfully ignored Saudi policy in particular towards the USSR, their discussions have tended to be either piecemeal or cursory. Similarly, Sarah Yizraeli, David Long, Naila Al Sowayel and Gregory Gause have conducted studies confined to examining other issues of Saudi Arabia or to individual crises associated with the state policy.<sup>46</sup> In the same context, studies that purport towards examine Saudi Arabia's policy during the Cold War tend to look uncritically at the importance of Saudi's policy to the USSR. These kinds of literature were to give perspectives and descriptions of historical aspects surrounding Saudi's policy process and revolving around the question of the state's role and its survival.<sup>47</sup>

A review of the literature, however, in the field of Saudi's foreign policy towards the USSR reveals a broad and deep underpinning, with 1973's oil embargo receiving notable scholarly impetus. Why the decade of the 70s was such an active one for research into Saudi foreign policy is probably best understood from the political level. It is clear to scholars that King Faisal's assassination and use of oil as a weapon were probably the principal reasons for revived academic

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<sup>46</sup> Saudi foreign policy towards to the USSR is rarely given a central place in the literature and also little academic analysis has been produced on this topic.

<sup>47</sup> al Fāiṣāl, *Malikan Fī Fikr Ummāh* (1976); Tāj al-Sārhan, *Al-Syāsah Al-Khārjīah Al-Sa'ūdīyah Fī 'ad Al-Malik Fāiṣl Bin 'Abd Alaziz*. (Al-khrṭom: al- Dār al-'rbiayah, 2000); ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjīd, *āḥdīth 'an Faiṣal Wa- Al-Taḏamn Al-Isāmi* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-jadeed, 1974).

interest in the literature. As Fouad Barradah stressed correctly, “since 1973, however, especially since the October War and the oil crises of that year, the number of works written on the country has increased.”<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, studies that have been undertaken concerning ‘Saudi foreign policy with the Soviet Union’ as the focal point are sparse and this is the time to reassess the foundational literature around which the field has formed.

Taking the aforementioned into account, a glance at the literature suggests that most studies of Saudi foreign policy conducted thus far seem to be historical narratives, case studies, and frameworks of variables and quantitative methods.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, Madawi Al-Rasheed’s findings predicted the same results for studying Saudi Arabia’s modern history and policy. She concluded that “the narratives of the state eliminate contentious facts and competing interpretations’ and ‘enforce obedience to the ruling group.”<sup>50</sup>

Toby Jones has thus modified the assumptions of historiography by saying, ‘while scholars have successfully detailed many of the key events that marked the realization of the state, much of the literature on Saudi Arabia’s political history remains bound to the same conceptual framework as the official

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<sup>48</sup> Fouad Kazem Barradah, “*Saudi Arabia’s Foreign policy: 1945-83*” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989), 74.

<sup>49</sup> While this body of literature exists on Saudi Arabia, it can be applied to most Arab states. Choueiri highlighted the fact that ‘Research historiography in twentieth-century Arab countries has firmly anchored on historians close to the state and national elite such as eminent professors and historians of textbooks and curricula, focusing on the question of legitimacy of power over country.’ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and The nation-State*, Revised edition, (London: Routledge, 2003), 33–35.

<sup>50</sup> Al Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 188.

historiography offered by the Saudi state.<sup>51</sup> Hence he stated, “the state’s role has been so central we still know very little about the details of its efforts to assert its authority on society, the history of state politics on the ground, or about the communities it oversaw and with which it interacted.”<sup>52</sup>

More to the point, Matthias Determann, a Middle East specialist, rightly examined the ways people in the country conceived and narrated their political modern history and to which extent and why these conceptions and narrations changed. Determann has aimed to offer an alternative understanding of historiography in Saudi Arabia by linking both processes leading to a pluralization in terms of approaches and narratives. Determann summarized his findings, reiterating that “while official historiography focused on the ruling elite, amateur and academic historians indeed came to produce competing interpretations and writings which encouraged allegiance to, and identifications with, non-elite groups, namely local communities and wider parts of the society.”<sup>53</sup> As I mentioned elsewhere, one of the aims of this work is to contribute to the literature on this topic, by investigating the official discourse and the intellectual history of Saudi Arabia in the Cold War, which can aid in the resourceful conceptualization of framing.

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<sup>51</sup> Toby Jones, “*The Dogma of the development: Technopolitics and the making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980*” (PhD. diss., Stanford University, 2006), 14.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Matthias Determann, “ ‘Globalization, the state and, Narrative plurality:’ Historiography in Saudi Arabia, 1932-2010” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies, Barcelona, July 21-23, 2010).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, many studies provide information about particularities of Saudi Arabia and the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s touching upon this intersection of academic fields. Several scholars have also examined various aspects of Saudi foreign policy during King Faisal's tenure and oil embargo. Although they have not made a clear distinction between the various drives of Saudi foreign policy, they have discussed the role of the search for secure boundaries.<sup>54</sup> Therefore a detailed description of Saudi policy does assist researchers in understanding certain aspects of the political system in Saudi Arabia. As such, academic analysis has been produced on these filed cleaves along two faults lines. The first is temporal, over the past three decades. A scholarly assemblage emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s that dealt with Saudi foreign policy in the Middle East in general and its policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and Arab Nationalism. This collective tends to focus on nascent Saudi Arabian policy and promoting its political agendas in the entire Middle East, both for its own interest as well as that of its allies, especially the US. By the same token, in this tendency scholars for this period had shown how Saudi Arabia had done everything in its power in building the alliance in the Arab and Islamic states, allowing Riyadh to deter the communist influence. Unfortunately, much of this tendency had drawn little attention toward Saudi policy towards the USSR and did not seek to understand in extra depth the Saudi obsession with Soviet policy in the Middle East.

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<sup>54</sup> For a detailed account of the different sources of Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the oil embargo see: Naila Al-Sowayel, *"A Historical Analysis of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy in Times of Crisis: The October 1973 War and the Arab Oil Embargo"* (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1990), 2-11.

On the other side, what follows from Toby Jones' remarks on the approach to studying Saudi political history in the late 1970s is that 'scholars began the tedious process of building a comprehensive narrative of the kingdom's political history, bringing to light previously unexamined details about the rivalries within the royal family and other threats to Saudi power.'<sup>55</sup> This tendency emerged in 1975 and thereafter, penned principally by Saudi scholars and those "non-regional experts" who admired Faisal and his legacy. Perhaps that is due to the sympathy and the solidarity they have shown since the late King was assassinated, representing a distinctive wave by introducing new terms and systematically understating the Cold War.<sup>56</sup> This vein of literature concentrates exclusively on Faisal and his pragmatic role, policy, the appreciation that he gained inside and outside Saudi Arabia and Faisal's his economic strategy.

This latter point "economic strategy" has attracted many scholars and the vast majority of studies on Saudi Arabia's political, economic and social development focus on the period after the oil boom in the mid-1970s until recently, as Toby Jones stressed correctly.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, a close examination of political and historical research reveals that much of the literature overlooked aspects of the country's policy towards the USSR, even though the role of Islam in Saudi Arabia under Faisal's rule has been echoed in recent literature reviews and critiques.

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<sup>55</sup> Jones, "The Dogma of the development: Technopolitics." (2006), 15.

<sup>56</sup> See, For example, Vincent Sheean, Faisal, *The King and his Kingdom* (Tavistock: University Press of Arabia, 1975); Gerald De Gaury, *Faisal: King of Saudi Arabia* (London: Barker, 1966); Sūaleh and L Shāmbūn.u, review of *al-syāsah al-khārjīah al-mamlakah al-‘arabīyah al-su‘ūdīyah*, by ‘Abd Allāh al-alsh‘l, *Markz Drāsāt Al-Khaleej Wa Al-Jazīrah Al-‘arabīah* 4, no. 15 (1978): 119–27.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, "The Dogma of the Development." (2006), 15-16.



Many recent books on Saudi Arabia have insufficient detail and hence 'allow their authors to make such crude mistakes instead of reviewing the vague ideas about the country and its policies.'<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, a minimum degree of examination of Saudi Arabia and the USSR will clearly show that most previous studies touched on this topic briefly, which explaining the divergent opinions but rarely been approached in such scholarly debates.

Having outlined the gaps in the existing literature, I will proceed to an examination of the few attempts that were made to highlight interesting enquiries into the matter of Saudi Arabia and the USSR during the Cold War, and more pointedly, in the role of Islam in fighting Communism. This kind of proposition enables us to understand the nature of the political involvement of Saudi Arabian policy in fighting Communism. Saudi scholars in the 1960s and 1970s had a tendency to focus on one aspect of Saudi Arabian foreign policy and gave it little attention, either for example the fluctuating conditions of regional political or the role of Islam in shaping state policy.<sup>59</sup>

Nizar Madani's work he saw the principal issue arising from Faisal's policy attempt to maintain the Islamic dimension by focusing on its impact upon the social, economic, and political system in Saudi Arabia.<sup>60</sup> As such, an interesting field study was done in 1980 by Hafiz and is indeed a clear feature of the

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<sup>58</sup> Pascal Menoret, *The Saudi Enigma: A History*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2005), 25.

<sup>59</sup> According to Jorg Matthias Dertermann, "the emergence of Saudi scholarship contributions was largely driven by the state-financed expansion education in the 1960s and 70s." Dertermann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 175.

<sup>60</sup> Madani, "The Islamic Content." (1977), 14-26.

literature.<sup>61</sup> The author elucidated the various aspects of and the changes stemming from Faisal's policy. Fouad Barradah provided a good reference for a study of this subject, with his 1989 dissertation in which he explored changes in Saudi Arabian foreign policy behavior over the 40-year period from 1945-1984. He described and analyzed the general objectives, policies, and the attitudes of Saudi Arabia toward the outside world.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, both authors limited their understanding of Faisal's policy toward the USSR, painting him as adversarial and combative with the USSR. Using such a large timespan (and one that mixes peace time with major wars) makes Hafiz's and Fouad's study a little unwieldy and somewhat general, leaving little room for any conclusion other than agreeing with intuitive notions.

Others focused on the oil embargo of 1973 and its emotional and political implications on state policy. An example of this, Naila Al-Sowayel in 1990 wrote 'A Historical Analysis of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy in Times of Crisis'. Her work focused on the political economy classification from a historical perspective. She tried to make her argument with the term "oil-weapon" as a crucial factor in shaping Faisal's policy to respond to any threat.<sup>63</sup> She went into particular depth on using the oil and business relationships as an independent policy variable. Naila, however, did not engage with or examine the question of what role Soviet policy would start to play before, during and after the oil embargo against the U.S. promoting its interests at this critical juncture between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>61</sup> Hafiz, "Change in Saudi Arabia Foreign Policy." (1980), 1-3.

<sup>62</sup> Barradah, "*Saudi Arabia's Foreign policy*." 1980.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Sowayel, "A Historical Analysis." (1990), 198-207.

David Long can fit in this category of writing after the oil embargo, having written extensively on Saudi Arabian policy and history. He examined how the six Saudi kings from Abdul-Aziz until the late king Abdullah formulated different foreign policy approaches with respect to the superpowers and different conflicts in their period.<sup>64</sup> Long concluded in his remarks about Faisal that “there is a marked continuity in Faisal’s hostile view of the Soviet Union threat and the ideational factor of pan-Arabism.”<sup>65</sup> Long put considerable effort into the side of his research and articles on the specificities of the Saudi Arabian Cold War policy and explaining and predicting the impact of Soviet regional penetration on Saudi Arabia and the Arabs.

While his understanding of Saudi Arabian policy with Moscow in the Cold War was in his mind, it did not evolve in an accretive trend. Another erudite Middle East scholar, Gregory Gause III, used *Saudi-Yemini Relations 1962-1982* as a foundation to determine how different Saudi Kings, from Saud to Khalid, dealt with the situation in Yemen, as it was a Soviet ally. His book delves into the ruling Saudi elites and their formative influence on Saudi domestic and foreign policies. Gause presented a detailed and well-documented account of the Saudi-Yemeni confrontation and cooperation that began with King Faisal's decision to support the monarchist forces in North Yemen against the republicans who

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<sup>64</sup> David E. Long, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2010); David E. Long and Sebastian Maisel, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Second Edition (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010); David E. Long, “King Faisal World View,” in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Willard A. Beling (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1982).

<sup>65</sup> Long, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2010), 180-185

controlled it.<sup>66</sup> He found some similarities as well as differences between each king in their foreign policy approach toward Yemen.<sup>67</sup> Gause argued, “Faisal was guided by a Saudi Arabia-first doctrine, which is rooted in the domestic Saudi quest for secure borders.”<sup>68</sup> Yet, what both authors also have in common is that they did not succeed in providing logical explanations about how Saudi Arabia prioritized dealing with the USSR among different kinds of threats.

Other books written about Faisal have been biographical in style.<sup>69</sup> These books are a brief biography of Faisal’s life and examine how a wily king, deftly navigating great power and Arab politics, secured his dynasty against the seemingly irresistible force of revolutionary nationalism. These biographers enjoyed special access to some of his subject’s papers and associates.<sup>70</sup> Ke’chichian’s book for example, ‘sees no downside to Faisal’s political use of Islam to garner legitimacy abroad, a vision that was modest, consistent, and

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<sup>66</sup> M. Kavossi, “Review of ‘*Saudi Yemini Relations* by George Gause III . *International Journal of the Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 539, doi: 10.1017/S0020743800060979.

<sup>67</sup> Gause, “Saudi- Yemeni relations.” (1982),1-3.

<sup>68</sup> Kavossı, Review of ‘*Saudi Yemini Relations*, (1994) 540.

<sup>69</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia: Personality, Faith and Times* (London: Saqi Books, 2012); Joseph A. Kechichian, *Faysal: Saudi Arabia’s King for All Seasons* (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 2008); Fāṭmah Al-freihī, *‘alāqāt Al-Su‘ūdīah Al-Maṣryah Fi ‘ad Al-Malik Fāiṣl Bin “Abd Al-”Azīz 1964-1975: Dirāsāt, Fi Al-‘lāqāt Al-Syāsīah* (Al-Riyādh: Dārah al’malik “abd al-”aziz, 2012). However, some scholars cast doubt on the scientific value of these kinds of books. The reason lies in the fact that biographers such as Kechichian or Vassiliev had been invited to Riyadh at the King Faisal Center for Islamic Studies by the monarch’s son Turki al-Faisal to write them. But nevertheless, these books, clearly and elegantly written, offer a crucial view into Faisal’s history, with extensive footnotes and a rich bibliography, interview and index, these book can be an invaluable new addition to the field.

<sup>70</sup> Nathan.J. Citino, “Review of “*Faisal: Saudi Arabia’s King for all seasons*, by Joseph Ke’chichian” *International Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2010): 358-59, doi:10.1017/S0020743810000267.

attuned to both earthly requirements as well as divine wisdom.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, by supporting anti-communist causes and demonstrating the ability to regulate global energy prices, Faisal set the stage for his kingdom to supplant Pahlavi Iran as Washington's indispensable Gulf ally.<sup>72</sup> If the strength of these books is their fieldwork, their weakness lies in the lack of deep discussion of Faisal's policy and its role with the superpowers. As mentioned earlier, I found myself reading the entire narrative once or twice to discern the chronology of events. I also wished that these authors had relied much more on framework and theoretical considerations, as should have been expected.

Moreover, there has been comparatively little Western secondary literature on Saudi Arabia since September 2001 prominently featuring the implication of the role of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. in fighting communism during the Cold War. By focusing on how Saudi Arabia "via the historical context," and in particular king Faisal, used the Islamic religion as an instrument for serving American and Western interests throughout the Cold War, their works highlighted the significance of Islamic diplomacy and ideology beyond the Cold War context.

As such, Rachel Bronson rightly points to the shortcomings in post-2001 literature on Saudi Arabia. After reading and reviewing a great deal of questions about Saudi Arabia in preparing her book "Thicker than oil", she mentioned an interesting point about the role of Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. She stated that, "the fact that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia's mutual fear of the Soviet Union's

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<sup>71</sup> Kechichian, *Faisal* (2008), 191.

<sup>72</sup> Citno, "Review of Faisal." (2010), 359.

expanding global influence was predicated on strategies and religious realities left behind a legacy that today enflames the Middle East.”<sup>73</sup>

These and other noteworthy studies have genuinely built up my intellectual development and framed my perspective in this study.<sup>74</sup> While these works provide valuable knowledge, I would argue that the only issue with this lack of western literature after 2001 is that the emotional charge of specific events has led to some hyperbole that resulted in a lack of scholarly intimacy with the contemporary history of the Saudi state. Not to mention the fact that a few studies have failed to take into account the mutual concern between Saudi Arabia and the West of communism and its dangers.<sup>75</sup>

In general, while the existing literature base is rich and robust, there is huge room for the kind of effort represented by this study. That is to say, this research is not a comprehensive diplomatic history of Saudi policy. It is primarily an attempt to situate an analyzed articulation but largely forgotten episode within

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<sup>73</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 76–77.

<sup>74</sup> For these notable contributions see for example: Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (London: Hutchinson, 2009); Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2011); David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006); Menoret, *The Saudi Enigma* (2005); Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006).

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington, D.C: Regnery, 2003); Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude* (New York, N.Y: Three Rivers Press, 2004); Daryl Champion, *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003); Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

the better-known framework of Saudi foreign policy with the USSR in the Cold War, as a model for the ensuing kings of Saudi Arabia. Examining the doctrine of Faisal at some length and its entirety is the best way to illuminate the underlying diplomatic dynamics of the state.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### Approaches to the Study of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia during the Cold War

Relatively little scholarly attention has been given to the formulation of Saudi foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s. The groundbreaking David Long's "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and William Quandt's book on Saudi Arabia in the 1980s were the first major attempts to analyze the formulation of Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War systematically and were followed by Sarah Yizraeli's "Politics and Society in Saudi Arabia." Added to these were Fawaz Gerges's 1994 work, "The Superpower and the Middle East," and Stephen Walt's book "The Origins of Alliances" which provided a strong base from which to analyze the foreign policy of the Middle East in the crucial years during the Cold War.<sup>76</sup>

The identification by Goldberg that "the overriding goal of Saudi foreign policy is thus of a defensive nature: securing the independence and integrity of the state"<sup>77</sup> is particularly valuable. This defensive orientation could also be described as 'non alignment as Korany and Fattah's Conceptualization referred to.'<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sarah Yizraeli, *Politics and Society in Saudi Arabia*. (2012); Long, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2010); Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981); Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 154.; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987).

<sup>77</sup> Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986),183.

<sup>78</sup> Bahgat Korany and Moataz Fattah, "Irreconcilable Role - Partners? Saudi Foreign Policy between the Ulama and the US," in *The Foreign Policy of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Ali Dessouki (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2008), 387.



Yet, for the most part, study of Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War has been subsumed into the broader theoretical debates of International Relations scholars seeking to apply universalistic rules to a Middle Eastern or Gulf states system, 'often to the protestation of area specialists, who are more concerned with stressing factors unique to the Middle East.'<sup>79</sup>

Both views have their relative strengths and weaknesses, but have been inadequate to explain foreign policy formulation on their own. Rather, a combination of sorts is required to understand the determinants of Saudi foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s and an attempt to come to an overall framework from which this study can depart.

One of the major battlegrounds for scholars is the quest to define the threat, which faced Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. This threat is of key interest to William Quandt, who argues, "that throughout the 1950s and 1960s the Saudis were particularly worried about the indirect Soviet threat to the region."<sup>80</sup> Following the emergence of radical ideologies of the Middle East "Nasserism, Baathism, Socialism and Communism were disastrous for Saudis, and Saudi leadership considered the communism threat as, for Quandt, a disruptive forces that served to advance Soviet interests in the Arab World."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, "Explaining International Politics in the Middle East: the Struggle of regional identity and systemic structure in *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policy and Relationship with Europe*, ed. Gergd Nonneman ( London: Routledge, 2005), 243.

<sup>80</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 65.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

David Long and Sebastain Maisel gave rise to further discussion of the threat that Saudi Arabia faced during the Cold War. They agreed with Quandt about the threat they faced by Communism and other ideologies in the 1950s and 60s, and they wrote that “the development of “encirclement syndrome” which has played a major role in the evolution of Modern Saudi Arabian foreign policy and the search for national security.”<sup>82</sup>

Under these circumstances Saudi Arabia was particularly vulnerable to attempts at subversion and destabilization.<sup>83</sup> Whether the threat of a communist incursion in the aftermath of Stalin’s death in March 1953 was real or imagined is irrelevant: it provoked a particular policy response to balance against the threat, and hence “has complicated their foreign policy choices.”<sup>84</sup> As Walt suggests, “states choosing allies in order to balance against the threats rather than against the power alone.”<sup>85</sup> The bottom line is that ‘state survival as the state is the only unit analysis when discussing international relations.’<sup>86</sup>

From this vantage point, Raymond Hinnebusch, the father of the framing of political perspective of the Middle East, contended that ‘regional threats most immediately shape Saudi foreign policy ever since. During most of the Cold War era the Saudis long feared encirclement from various combinations of the

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<sup>82</sup> David E. Long and Sebastian Maisel, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Second Edition edition (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 145–146.

<sup>83</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 7.

<sup>84</sup> Gause, “the Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia.” (2002), 197.

<sup>85</sup> Walt, *The origins of Alliance* (1987), 95.

<sup>86</sup> John Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism, in “*International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. Ed. Tim Dunne and Milja Smith (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2007), 74.

republicans and Marxist-communist regimes.’<sup>87</sup> Therefore, “Saudi leaders did not try to play Moscow off against Washington.”<sup>88</sup>

Even in the Arab World, the nationalist movements of Nasserism, Baathism, Socialism and Communism were viewed by the Saudi leadership as “disruptive forces that served to advance Soviet interests.”<sup>89</sup> “These threats made Saudi Arabia highly dependent on Western, particularly American protection globally in the Cold War, but regionally sometimes run its own desire to maintain its Islamic credentials.”<sup>90</sup> This approach of Saudi Arabia, which arose in the Cold War, reiterated the importance of regime’s security and avoiding confrontation at best and hence “served a domestic political purpose, namely to boost the Saudi regime’s religious credentials.”<sup>91</sup> In this light and because of the foregoing “one of the cornerstones of the Saudi foreign policy throughout the twentieth century was opposition to the establishment of any pan-Arab political formation.”<sup>92</sup>

Drawing from this notion, the concepts of Arab unity and nationalism did not appeal to Saudi Arabia in the Cold War “as Saudi Arabia was trying to ensure an equilibrium of power to prevent challenges from Egypt or any other major powers.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 131.

<sup>88</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 65.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (2003), 131; Naif Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962: Allies in Conflict* (London: Saqi, 2010), 20.

<sup>91</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 17.

<sup>92</sup> Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986), 181.

<sup>93</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 14.

Taking the above into account side by side in maintaining its political environment led to a current of pragmatist “realism” that has dominated Saudi foreign policy in the Cold War, an apparent validation of realist maxims. As Elham Manea points out, “the Saudi’s realist disposition had had a direct impact on the country’s external conduct.”<sup>94</sup> Gerd Nonneman has provided such additional insight into the nature of pragmatic adaptation of Saudi Arabian policy surveying that ‘the presence of external (regional and global) threats throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, resulted in policy output that has essentially been pragmatic of acquiring outside protectors while maintaining relative autonomy of securing economic resources or regional and Islamic status.’<sup>95</sup>

As such, when we examine, apply, and integrate this premise into the framework of this study, the religious-political aspect will be the focal point of this study. In this regard, Saudi Arabia, in particular to Faisal's policy in the Cold War, is better understood as politics realistically structured along religious lines. As, Madani suggested King Faisal's main policy in the Cold War was the realistic approach to international policies; was motivated by his long experience in foreign affairs and his living through many international political events and his own devoted religious belief.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Elham Manea, *Regional Politics in the Gulf* (2005), 127.

<sup>95</sup> Nonneman, “Determining and Patterns of Saudi Foreign Policy.” (2005), 339.

<sup>96</sup> Madani, “*The Islamic Content.*” (1977), 57.

King Faisal's realism was reflected in foreign policy by precise evaluation of the country's capabilities.<sup>97</sup> However, most importantly, for Faisal and other Saudi kings, Saudi Arabia's location placed it at the center of two overlapping concentric circles: the Arab and the Islamic. Under Faisal, Saudi developed an activist foreign policy that sought to maximize the state's influence in the international arena. Yet, the primacy that is placed upon the interests of the state as a unitary actor, as suggested by many realist perspectives has proved open to challenge by scholars such as Barnett, who illustrated that the interests of the state are not unipolar.<sup>98</sup>

Another important point of the debate when discussing Saudi policy during the Cold War is assessing whether ideological or ideational concerns were a driving factor in Faisal's policy to confront the USSR. Scholars who have focused on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia have noted the importance of the ideological factor, the "classical Islamic model", "Islamic diplomacy" or "Pan-Islamism" to confront the threat that Saudis faced during the Cold War.<sup>99</sup> The Pan-Islamism hypothesis has been especially popular with a few scholars seeking to grasp Saudi policy during the Cold War and its involvements systemically. In using the Pan-Islamism, it yields a richer understanding of the state policy and overcomes shortcomings associated with previous studies

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Michael N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional order in the Arab States System" in *International Organization*, vol. 49, No 3 (Summer, 1995 ) 497-510.

<sup>99</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 36-39; Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (2003), 130-133; Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 20-22.

Therefore, the analysis of Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War can be overlaid conceptually on the Islamic model.<sup>100</sup> While the foreign and national security policy issues confronting Saudi Arabia have changed drastically since King Faisal's day, the overall policy framework, 'modified from the classical Islamic model of International Relations, remains intact as laid out by Long.'<sup>101</sup> Using this model enables a number of confusing elements of Saudi foreign policy and national security policies to come into better perspective.

The norms of the Saudi Islamic credentials in dealing with the USSR throughout the Cold War were firmly anchored in scholars' writing of the Cold War, focusing on the Faisal regime's idea that "the threat to Islam came, according to Saudi Arabia, not from the West, but from atheist communism, of which Zionism was claimed to be an offshoot."<sup>102</sup>

An additional and perhaps more important impetus is a consequence of what Niblock advanced "in the period since 1962 religion retained its crucial importance to the self-identity of the Saudi state, but the state played a more central role in religious affairs."<sup>103</sup> Both Hinnebusch and Niblock agreed the importance of the Islamic model in understating Saudi's policy to the USSR and its professional nature.

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<sup>100</sup> Long, *the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2010), 108.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>102</sup> Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (2003), 131.

<sup>103</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival*, The Contemporary Middle East (London: Routledge, 2006), 47.

But the need to re-examine the classical Islamic model, which allows for analysis of the role of ideational factors in relations between the states and highlights the importance of domestic politics, was elegantly expressed by David Long.

However, without linking Islam as a part of Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the Cold War, it becomes impossible to explain why using religion occurred in Faisal's policy more discernibly while not in other Saudi kings. Consequently, according to Long, "Faisal's political doctrine, inspired by Islamic classic theory, involved a lot of elements seeming sometimes theoretically confused, putting together different political factors, but its most revolutionary points have been the concepts of exploration of Islamic values promoting the solidarity of the Islamic states."<sup>104</sup> This manifested itself in the 1960s and early 1970s when "pan- Islamism was revived in a less utopian, namely Saudi king Faisal's call for coordination and mutual aid between Muslim countries in the Cold War as a an alliance-building tool against to Communism and Arab Nationalism."<sup>105</sup>

Realizing that actual and potential danger of all irreligious ideologies to Islam, "Faisal sought to establish a strong Islamic predominance policy as preventative measure for the Islamic nation."<sup>106</sup> And yet its leitmotif was clearly not Islamic piety, for the pact included the Shah of Iran and Habib Bourgubia of Tunisia- men

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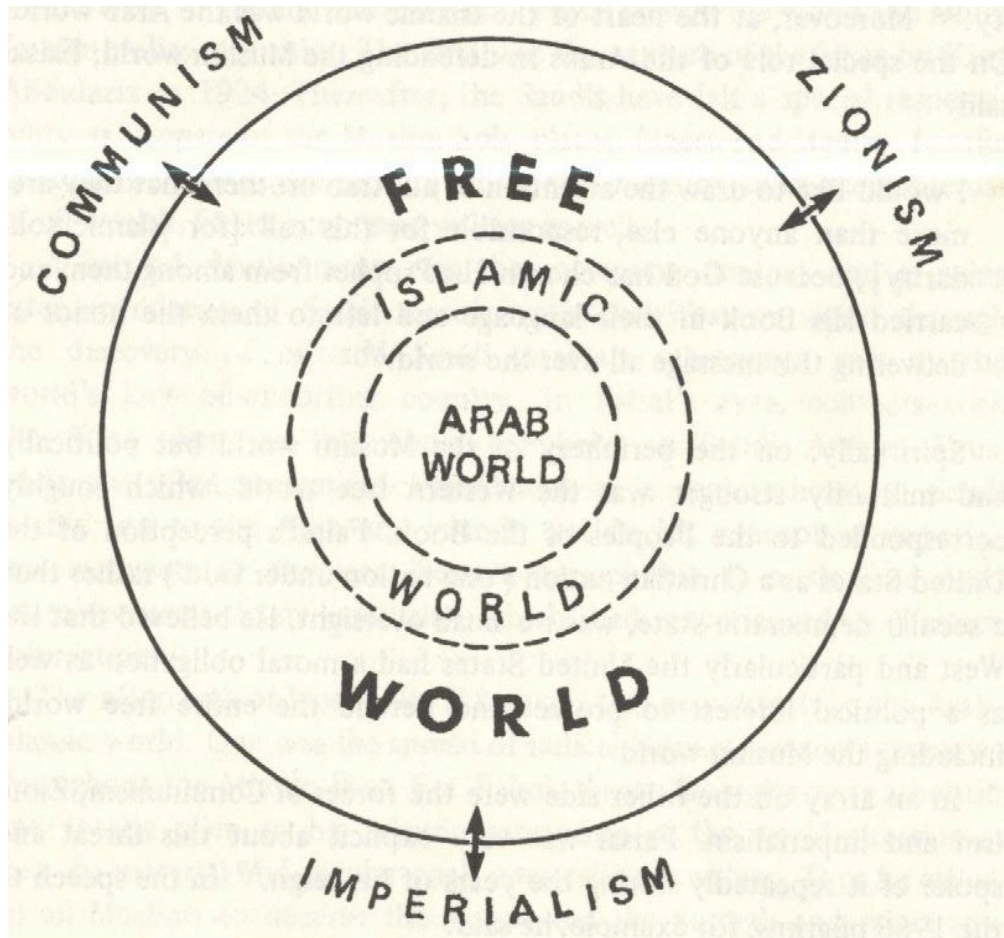
<sup>104</sup> Long, "Faisal's world view." (1982), 176.

<sup>105</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 17.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion: The Islamic Oratory of King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz*, 33.

not particularly known for their observance of Islam.<sup>107</sup> Rather it was a weapon that Faisal's regime brandished against enemies.

"The Classic Islamic theory of Faisal policy."<sup>108</sup>



Hence 'Saudi cooperation with the Christian West in combating the threat of atheistic communism to the Muslim world could also be made to conform to the Islamic classification model.'<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 63.

<sup>108</sup> Long, "Faisal's world view." (1982), 180.

<sup>109</sup> Long, "Faisal's world view." (1982), 180.



Hence, the Islamic conception of the World and the international system of Islam gradually influenced his thinking and the development of his theory of international relations.<sup>110</sup>

While conceding that domestic and external structures played a major role in forming the Saudi foreign policy, Manea emphasized the importance of legitimacy in adopting an Islamic foreign policy model.<sup>111</sup> This sense of encirclement syndrome of Saudi Arabia, noted William Quandt, “generated a web of involvement with the world that precluded a return to comfortable isolation.”<sup>112</sup> Therefore, Saudi foreign policy in the 1962-1975 period and, to large extent in the next two decades that followed, was essentially dominated by setting its principal motifs on a combination of Islamic percepts and environmental condition.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>111</sup> Elham Manea, *Regional Politics in the Gulf* (2005), 125.

<sup>112</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 9.

**Research method**

This study focuses largely on King Faisal's vision toward the Soviet Union from 1962-1975. I carefully weigh the relative importance of internal and external implications behind the developments in that time of this study concerned against the historical perspective. The subject matter of this study leads me to focus on sources related to policy orientations and contemporary history sources to grasp the nature and the direction of the diplomatic history of Saudi Arabia.

The methodology employed here is an analysis of primary and secondary sources. On both sides, the sources include, but not be limited to, official government statements, various American Foreign Relations Documents, as released by the U.S. Department of State, documents from the British archives, Russian translated books", Saudi and Arab sources.

Furthermore, I re-visit rigorously a broad range of academic literature on the subject, including works from such diverse disciplines as modern history, international relations, comparative politics, and security and terrorism studies perspectives. I have also used other sources, like biographies, public opinion data, scholarly writings, periodicals, and newspapers, which often provided leads to further primary-source materials. As such, the most original components of my research are is that the bulk of my primary sources consist of documents which amount to around forty official papers from the National Archives in London, with several primary source books discussed in my thesis, particularly for the second and third chapter. I have also used John F. Kennedy Presidential

Library and Museum for the third and fourth chapter. The Electronic Archives, such as Weklikessl, CIA, and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training are extremely useful in making my thesis quite original. These documents have been carefully selected as to reflect the state policy and the particular time periods under investigation.

As one might expect, research in Saudi Arabia, and in the Gulf in general, is fundamentally different from other countries, which makes one exuberant socially for the project, but academically lukewarm for his research. Public archives, such as King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Dārah al'malik 'abd al-'aziz),<sup>113</sup> are very difficult to access and hardly include sensitive material.

This explains why I utilized various forms of documents the U.S and the U.K. regarding the Saudi Arabia and also carried out archival and other research in the libraries of various institutions around the world: Durham Library, SOAS Library, British Library, LES Library, Arab World Documentation Unit at the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) in Riyadh, King Fahd National Library in Riyadh, King Saudi University Library in Riyadh (KSU), as well visiting Aramco Library in Dammam.

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<sup>113</sup> The public archives in Saudi Arabia contain a large number of primary sources but there are relatively available to scholars and you have to take permission to consultation to obtain them. In example of this is: The archives of the Royal Court in Riyadh are example for that where you have to go through bureaucratic process to access, “the insensitive documents”.

In the U.S. I carried out a good tour at Georgetown University in DC, New York University (NYU) and Princeton University Library, as well as the Library of Congress in Washington. Moreover, since King Faisal's rule culminated over forty years ago, this study necessarily relies on a historical approach in order to understand his policy. This historical approach takes a largely chronological approach, with occasional thematic diversions, starting off with an initial chapter.

In this context, the historical analysis in which this study relies on an important method involved in understanding Saudi policy in the Cold War, which, as frequently happened, proved intertwined and at times hard to untwine. Thus, one of the most fruitful approaches is that which takes a historical perspective then critiques the views presented, leading to an understanding of the diplomatic history of Saudi Arabia in the Cold War and finally gain a multifaceted view on the decision-making process.

From this vantage point, any political historian has to be rather creative and incorporate a broad range of sources, including local and oral history. Social scientists often have to adopt 'a historical perspective because understanding the political history of the state can be quite sensitive to open discussion, and often only become visible in debates about historical events.'<sup>114</sup> Thus, the historical divisions on which my research is based would probably allow me to

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<sup>114</sup> Toby Matthiesen, *The Other Saudis: Shiism, Dissent And Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 15–17.

conduct a study of a critical period to which we can trace the origins of almost every important element in Saudi Arabia with the USSR.

I also adopted herein a mixed-method approach based upon a close, hermeneutical reading of written sources, observations and in-depth discussions. I am not restricting myself to reading English or Western texts but rather to a plethora of Arabic resources and a number of unpublished Masters and Doctoral dissertations written by Saudis in Western Universities. I have direct meetings and discussions with individuals who were actively involved or wrote in the formulation of foreign policy and take down notes rather than recording the interviews at the request of my interviewees. I draw upon "individuals and elites"<sup>115</sup> closely connected to the subject further to enhance the research basis of this work to assess the policies as well as their perceptions of the benefits and successes or otherwise, of Saudi policy toward the USSR.

Accordingly, one of my own proposed methods in this study is conducting a discourse analysis alongside a historiographical approach from Saudi and Arab political historians through comparisons of primary sources, and Saudi national discourses on this subject. Understanding the ideas, concepts the narratives that devolved on a national scale by Saudi scholars could help in reading the sets of ideas of a strong tend of anti-Communist that shaped the official narratives of

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<sup>115</sup> Among the interviewees are with current and former Saudi scholars, their supervisors in Western and Saudi Universities, the head of state agencies inside the kingdom, high religious people inside Saudi Arabia, political analysts, journalists, postgraduate students, and the sons of King Faisal, and other. The interviews were conducted mainly in Saudi Arabia, the U.S., the U.K., and other E.U. countries over the period of 2012 to 2015.

incompatibility of Islam of Communism. That way, I can make use of some Arabic and Islamic sources, which could help answering my research questions. Comparisons will then be made in order to gain a multifaceted view on the subject; and it will be reformulated according to the critical appraisal method.

To further comprehend the research methodology, a central figure of this work is why King Faisal's doctrine has placed such emphasis on the political history of Saudi Arabia. While politicians and historians generally rank Faisal as a high average King, Faisal's own academics admire him as a pragmatic king.<sup>116</sup> Correspondingly, what factors account for Faisal's ability to make him different whereas other kings in Saudi were less successful? I will look at the way King Faisal structured the role of his advisors and the influence his advisors had on the way policy was formulated? How much or how little did he rely on his foreign-policy advisors? Yet personality, no doubt, "will remain for a long time the major factor in the politics of Saudi Arabia."<sup>117</sup> As Gause suggests, "when there is a strong king, as in the days of King Abdualziz or Faisal (1962-1975) decision-making on foreign policy is concentrated in his hands."<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Samore's statement, in reference to Faisal's period, "the central characteristic of the royal family during Faisal's reign was the dominant position of the king."<sup>119</sup> In this regard, Steffen Hertog argues that "the post-1962

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<sup>116</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808, 'Arab Oil Embargo', 12, July, 1967.

<sup>117</sup> George A. lipsky, *Saudi Arabia "its people its society its culture* (New Haven: HARF Press, 1959), 112.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Gray S, Samore, "Royal Family Politics in Saudi Arabia "1953-1982" " ( PhD diss., Harvard university, 1984), 230.

consolidation of authority did not automatically lead to smoother decision-making, as authority remained centered around the Al Saud and their king.”<sup>120</sup>

An integral part of this research deals with the explanation of policy input (factors affecting foreign policy making) and policy output (dimensions of political decision making). Thus, the subject matter of this study has led me to examine and analyze the role of king Faisal as an individual powerful figure since he was the only political figure in foreign policy decision-making procedures inside his kingdom.<sup>121</sup> The credentials of Faisal as King and minister of foreign affairs (working in tandem and a centralization of authority) were unsurpassed by any other leader in the Middle East, particularly given his reputation as a religious man and benevolent politician. This is will be viewed in the context of an interplay between the religion and state.

This dissertation, in exploring Saudi policy and its impact on USSR strategies in the larger Middle East, will provide a framework for understanding the policy between a superpower and a small state. I thus postulate that Saudi policy with the USSR is a particularly important topic to study because both were authoritarian regimes that had its own policy priorities and legitimacy, characterized by a situation of prolonged hostilities, limiting their relationships

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<sup>120</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 66.

<sup>121</sup> On an official letter by a British diplomat via the British embassy in Riyadh, it was stated that ‘Faisal is Saudi Arabia’s strength and at the same time her weakness. He listens to advice, but trusts only to his own judgment. He has been the fulcrum of Saudi Arabian policy since his father died 1953.’ PRO, FO 8,757 (BQ 2/1 Part B), ‘Saudi Arabian Political Affairs (External) U.K Policy & Relations’, 22 February 1967.

to just diplomatic relations. That is to say that both states were not the same and did not wholly constrain or determine their behavior. In fact, individual actors and non-state actors contributed to determining state behavior, but generally within the rules of the system. The aforementioned components provide a focal point when examining the nature of non-state actors and its interplay with the state foreign policy in the case of this topic.

An attempt will also be made to draw some general observations in order to reach possible conclusions about what Saudi Arabia gained, did and lost in the Cold War based on the historical view. However, one thing is more important to underscore here, is that throughout the course of this study, emphasis will always be limited as much as possible to the task of analysis and not description.

Perhaps I would add a word here about what this dissertation does not seek. It absolutely does not seek to advance a biography about King Faisal or interpretation of his political actions inside the royal family to consolidate his rule. Nor does it intend to provide a psychopolitical analysis of Faisal and his drives, nor elaborate on his economic reforms in the 1960s. My approach is not to touch upon on these topics unless it had an impact on his vision of dealing with the USSR, otherwise this would limit the importance of my work. Hence, this thesis is written with a view to examining the behavior between Saudi Arabia and the USSR during the Cold War, especially seeking to determine empirically over the period 1962-1975, which is confined primarily to Saudi Arabia under King Faisal's policy toward the Soviet Union and looks into the Saudi foreign policy towards the USSR in depth.



## **Research design**

The above questions will be introduced with a definitive scholarly analysis, on the basis of these sources mentioned above and the framework defined earlier in this chapter, to make a solid contribution to this important topic. Hence, this study is organized chronologically and singled out the factors that shaped Saudi Arabia's policy towards the USSR. The following analysis is therefore concerned of the period from 1962-1975 from domestic, regional and international political spaces to set the scene and explain the nature of the country's foreign policy in the Cold War. As such, the research structure to this study, it is divided into six chapters, each chapter addressing a turning point, in addition to a conclusion.

The preliminary chapter has focused on setting the importance of this thesis within the diplomatic history of the Cold War and a statement on the topic of understanding the determinants for Saudi policy, outlining an overall framework from which to place the academic field of this thesis. The second chapter has focused on setting a theoretical framework, attempting to understand the determinants for Saudi policy and providing a chronicle of the various strengths and weaknesses of major efforts to create a methodology. This chapter is critically refined the sources, determinants, and the factors that shape and influence the country's foreign policy in the cold War, before widening its scope for the purpose of this thesis to fully understand the state's behavior in the Cold War. This chapter also seeks to clarify how Saudi Arabia historically conducted its diplomatic tools that used in dealing with the USSR and what role religion played within these framing processes.

My third chapter analyses the importance of the historical dimension between Saudi Arabia and the USSR from the beginning of the 1950s until the end of this decade. This is viewed in the context of interplay between regional–international environments, leading to the development of the sub-theory of framing state security of how factors guided to Saudi Arabia to distance its self from Moscow.

As such, it traces the origins of the reluctant relationship between Riyadh and Moscow and highlights the various phases and developments of these relationships. Analytically, this chapter shows the emergence of oppositions, which was the propelling force of Saudi Arabia to openly distance itself from Communism and carry out a systematic policy to do so. It stresses the impact of the domestic political factors, which changed Saudi's position under King Faisal's government. Subsequently, I focus on further implications of Saudi Arabia under the beginning of Faisal's rule of the modern Saudi state from the 1960s on growing its national power of the state.

Chapter four pays special attention to the connection between Arab nationalism and the USSR position in the Arab World and the difficulties the Faisal regime faced in dealing with raising of Nasser of Egypt. It takes the emphasis to how Arab nationalism and the populist policies of Nasser's Egypt appealed to a large number of Saudi Arabian citizens at the local and regional level. This chapter traces the origins of the regional rivalry and attempts to illustrate the analogies of Communism and Arab nationalism ideologies, employed by Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the appearance of parallel trends of Arab nationalism, Communism and anti-imperialism is the subject of this chapter.

In seeking to explain these overlapping ideologies, I examine how the differences between the regional powers of Saudi Arabia and Egypt and their agendas exacerbated the problem the key of the Yemeni conflict of 1962. It then elaborates on the American position in this war, how was Saudi Arabia was to win support for a long –awaited American role, as the conflict framed as anti-Communists efforts in the Arab world. Thus, this thesis dissects the role played by the U.S. in this juncture within the literature of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy in the Cold War.

Chapter five discusses the importance of Islam and its role in the context of the Cold War and how religion was inextricably linked to state policy orientation. The central concern in this chapter is to understand how pan-Islamism utilized in an effort to mobilize social actors in Saudi Arabia and beyond. This includes the promotion of Islamic values or the Islamic boom at the midst of the Cold War providing incentives and new opportunities for preventing subversive ideas of Communism, and nationalism from spreading and the ideological developments in Saudi Arabia. I scrutinize how the Saudi state mobilized Islamic principles to make a socio-religious change, and adopt it as a policy by rejecting the notion of different ideologies, which implied political action. I also investigate to what extent the constructions of the state religious institutions and non-state actors facilitated the implementation of government anti-communist policy, bearing in mind the at least non-state actors were working in Saudi’s favor in the Cold War.

Chapter six highlights the debate within Faisal's political view of Communism and Zionism or as he famously said "they are two sides of the same coin." It first describes how these ideologies related to one another, as important for an understanding of Faisal's policy with the USSR. Since the Arab-Israeli conflict in the last century had become increasingly overshadowed in the relations between Saudi Arabia and the USSR, this chapter then examines the implications of this conflict and offers new interpretations of the Palestinian issue on Saudi Arabia and the USSR. This chapter brings the discussion back to the regional disputes of Arab-Israeli and takes into consideration its impact on the Cold War strategy. In this, I will be examining Saudi policy with Egypt after changing its ties with Communism and becoming as ideologically pro-Western. It also elaborates on the stages of Saudi's approach to the Soviets from 1967 and the oil embargo in 1973, and identifies the foreign policy changes during that time.

As a conclusion, key findings of this research will be drawn together to clarify the conditions under which Faisal's policy with the USSR was guided. I will point out the limitations of this study and findings. I will summarize the main factors for understanding Saudi's policy with Communism. The conclusion also explores the important outcomes of Saudi Arabian foreign policy in the Cold War generally. It also serves as epilogue that explores how this research increases our understanding of Saudi policy in dealing Communism evolved towards the end of twentieth century.

## Chapter 3

### - Unlikely Allies in historical context.

The end of the Second World War in 1945 demonstrated a deep shift in regional politics, in particular in the Middle East, “where alliance-politics have ever played an important role in state action.”<sup>122</sup> Those alliances did not happen in a vacuum but as the result of a complex web of factors that manifested themselves in such a way and such a time between Middle Eastern states and outside powers such as the US and the USSR during Cold War times “where different states aligned with one or the other side in order to increase chances to maximize their own interests.”<sup>123</sup> This is certainly arguable for Saudi Arabia, which was reassessing its foreign policy alignment during the Cold War and chose the US side, ‘and did not even try to play Moscow off against Washington.’<sup>124</sup> As a result, understanding the modern history of Saudi- USSR relations is important to any analysis of the development in Faisal’s policy towards the USSR. That period also provides important insights when assessing foreign policy over the last decades, and prospects for the future. Hence, the analysis here in this chapter starts after 1953 as Ibn Saud the founder of Saudi Arabia died. My objective therefore is not to narrate the whole history but rather to contextualize my arguments of the historical juncture of the relations where the period of this study is concerned “1962-1975”, the period that was replete with historic events and its implications for the Saudi attitude towards the Soviets.

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<sup>122</sup> Philipp Muller, “*Driving Forces behind alliances Building in the Middle East.*” (BIPS) Beiträge zur Internationalen Politik & Sicherheit, no. 01 (2011): 1, ISSN 1861-2881.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 65.

### **The Broader Saudi- USSR Reluctant Relationship.**

Compared with all the main powers, Saudi –Soviet relations had extremely limited contact over the years; with the exception of the period 1926-38 there had not been diplomatic relations between them.<sup>125</sup> While the Soviet Union was among the first states to recognize Saudi Arabia in 1932, Moscow quickly changed course and aligned itself with Arab nationalism. Thus, as Hafiz argued, “the USSR opted to cunningly utilize its policy of polarization.”<sup>126</sup> Therefore, would Saudi Arabia try and succeed in balancing its relations with the USSR or would ideological and cultural factors lead Saudi Arabia to move much closer to the US and West side?

In essence, Saudi policy in the early 1950s remained relatively unchanged towards the Soviet Union, seeking to “maintain the political status quo (with great caution) in general and in the Middle East in particular in the face of radical forces bent on disrupting order and stability.”<sup>127</sup> While the USSR had the ambition to become “the central force” in the global context, Saudi in the 1950s was at the beginning of its development as a small and nascent nation.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 131.

<sup>126</sup> Hafiz, “Changes in Saudi Foreign policy.” (1980), 98.

<sup>127</sup> Jacop Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia’s Attitude toward the USSR, 1977-1980: Between Saudi Pragmatism and Islamic Conservation,” in *The USSR and the Muslims World*, ed. Yaacov Ro’i (London: George Allen& Unwin, 1984), 261.

<sup>128</sup> Al-ṭūrki, Mājed, Abdūa’iz. Wāq’ āl’lāqāt ālsāudiāh alrussiāh. In, Al-ṭūrki, Mājed, Abdūa’iz “āl’lāqāt ālsāudiāh alrussiāh, wāq’ and taṭl’āt, (Al-Riyāḍ, : Mā’ed al-edārḥ al-‘āmāh, 2005),1.

Broadly speaking, Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War had been directed towards the two main challenges: how to contain the communist threat seen as the biggest threat to Saudi Arabia, and also how to solve the Palestinian tragedy. The latter shares the Arab world's sense of injustice against the Palestinian issue, but the communist threat demonstrated grave danger for Saudi policy and its legitimacy. This threat in particular in Saudi eyes, would somehow touch the sharp religious legitimacy that the Saudi royal family largely relies on largely for their survival.<sup>129</sup>

What we are addressing, then, are issues of foreign policy toward the USSR rather than foreign policy orientation. As Long suggested, "the Saudis saw atheistic Communism as an even greater threat to the Muslim way of life than Zionism was, and they looked to the West as the last defense of the Muslim world."<sup>130</sup> Political scientist Fouad Barradah has argued that following the Second World War, "the kingdom was sympathetic to policies followed by Great Britain and the United States aimed at blocking Soviet expansion in the Middle East. As such, Saudi Foreign policy was always centered on a basic rejection of atheistic communism and on a religious distrust of radical or Marxist regimes."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> PREM, FCO 11/943, 'Soviet overtures to Saudi Arabia', 26 August 1955.

<sup>130</sup> Long, *the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (1985), 110.

<sup>131</sup> Barradah, "Saudi Foreign Policy." (1989); 271.; Al-ṭūrķī, Wāq' āl'lāqāt ālsāūdīāh alrussiāh (2005), 1-3.

Thus the rejection of atheistic communism of Saudi Arabia's religiosity valued Riyadh's position since the dawn of the Cold War and "added to the words "Under God" between Saudi Arabia and the US."<sup>132</sup>

Perhaps, in Saudi eyes, the danger of that non-religious communist threat, as the embodiment of the destruction of religion, played a role as a promotional vehicle inside the kingdom for vindicating its policy with the USSR and convinced its people about any action they might take ahead of time against the Communists in Saudi Arabia. This, in fact, appeared to provide an additional outlet for the Saudi leadership to be the spearhead and the self-styled right to fight USSR policy and its advocates in the Middle East.

In Quandt's characterization of Saudi Arabia after the Second World War, "the Saudis were fervently anticommunist, to the point of allowing their territory to be used as part of the U.S. global network of strategic bases. In return the Saudis gained unprecedented wealth and a powerful protector."<sup>133</sup> Drawing from this argument, the strategic location of Saudi Arabia, the importance of oil resources was vital to the defense of the United States, which enabled the two countries to reach their first major military accord, al Dhahran Air field.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 26.

<sup>133</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 49.

<sup>134</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 25; al-Dhahran air field was an air base created by the US force in the eastern province in Saudi Arabia to facilitate wartime redeployment of U.S forces during the policy of containment with the Soviets at the beginning of the 1950s.



The commercial value of the Dhahran airfield, near the Dammam oil fields increased the value of a geographical position “that was within a thousand miles-striking distance- of the Soviet Union.”<sup>135</sup> The importance of al- Dharhan airfield led the Soviet ambassador in Syria to ask King Saud about the status of al-Dharhan airfield to which the king replied by saying, “it was a Saudi base, at which the United States had been granted certain facilities.”<sup>136</sup>

However, “the denial of air space to the Soviet Union was very important to the U.S. planners and also a hub for American procured weapons during the Cold War.”<sup>137</sup> Hence “it would be a useful force in the event of War with Russia.”<sup>138</sup> The U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1950 recalled in an interview “the Russians were acting in a very alarming way, ‘Dhahran airfield’ in the Eastern province was particularly important as a staging point in the event of trouble with the Russians.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> PRO, FO 371/133148, ‘*Political relations between Saudi Arabia and Soviet Union*’, 10 March 1958.

<sup>137</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 25.

<sup>138</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Frederick H. Awalt of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs,” FRUS, 1950, VI: 1626. At <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/ch9subch1?start=1> (Accessed 5 May 2014).

<sup>139</sup> ADST, Oral history of Ambassador Raymond Hare, Interviewed by Dayton Mak in 22 July 1987. At <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Hare,%20Raymond%20A.toc.pdf>. (Accessed 15 July 2014). Here, the former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the 1960s Parker Hart, touched upon this in his book , Saudi Arabia and the United States, where he mentioned “Diplomacy of Air Force” about the value of this air base and further stated the following, “it was of potential value as a strategic backup- a hinterland in the evolving security structure that in 1955 became the Baghdad Pact”. See *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 66.

The State Department also suggested strongly to Saudi Arabia “it would be a mistake to make any fresh representation between Russia and Riyadh.”<sup>140</sup> Therefore, reminiscences from the twenties apparently influenced the Soviet attitude towards the Saudi rulers, when Ibn Saud had been considered the coming ruler of the Arab World.<sup>141</sup> By contrast, in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, “the Soviet media were generally hostile, accusing the Saudis of having sold out to the United States and the oil companies, and of serving United States imperialism by allowing the Americans to operate from al- Dharhan air base.”<sup>142</sup>

In addition, the Soviet media maintained an ambivalent attitude towards Saudi Arabia. On the one hand the country was described as “a symbol of reaction, backwardness, feudalism, serving imperialism, but at the same time the Soviets described the Saudi rulers as a victim of colonialism, exploited by the imperialist oil monopolies and forced to serve them.”<sup>143</sup> Here, Shahram Chubin argued about the success of Soviet policy in the Middle East, if it had relations with Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. He argued that, “Saudi activism in Arab politics makes it important in issues outside the Gulf, while its leadership on the

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<sup>140</sup> PREM, FCO 11/943, ‘*Soviet overtures to Saudi Arabia.*’, (1955).

<sup>141</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (London: Routledge 1959), 155.

<sup>142</sup> Mishel A. Al Mosaed, “The USSR and the Gulf States relations since the British Withdrawal from east of Suez in 1971” (Ph.D., diss, Denver University, 1990).

<sup>143</sup> Aryeh Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula: Soviet policy Toward the Persian Gulf and Arabia* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 8.

peninsula virtually guarantees that small sheikdoms would follow suit if Riyadh established diplomatic relations.”<sup>144</sup>

For many scholars, during the decade between 1948 and 1958, the creation of Israel, the UAR, the struggle for Palestine, the revolution in Iraq, the rise of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism made the Middle East stand high among the global danger zones.<sup>145</sup> For Yaqub, “this development was key for the Soviets to court the Arabs.”<sup>146</sup> This situation somehow enabled the Soviets to create a conducive atmosphere to succeed in their plans in the Middle East. As Golan put it rightly, “the Soviet Union itself was not perceived by the Arab World as an imperialistic power; rather the image of the champion of the anti-imperialist struggle had taken hold.”<sup>147</sup>

From this vantage point, within a few years, Soviet influence had grown to such an extent that many politicians and analysts would predict the imminent absorption of Arab states into the Soviet orbit.<sup>148</sup> The rapid spread of Soviet

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<sup>144</sup> Shahram Chubin. *Regional Perceptions of the Impact of Soviet policy in the Middle East* (Washington DC: International Security Studies Program, Wilson Center, 1981). Introduction.

<sup>145</sup> Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and The Middle East* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 32- 33& Walter Laqueur, *The Struggle for the Middle East: The Soviet Union and the Middle East 1958-70* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972),27

<sup>146</sup> Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism* (2004), 33.

<sup>147</sup> Galia Golan, “The Middle East, in “*The Soviet Union in World Politics*, ed. Kurt. London. (Boulder Colo: West Press, 1980), 112.

<sup>148</sup> Adeed Dawisha, “The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence, ” in *The Soviet Union In The Middle East: Policies and perspectives*, ed. Adeed Dawisha& Karen Dawisha. (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1982), 9. ; John C Campbell, “ The Gulf Region in the Global setting, ” in *The Security of the Persian Gulf*, ed, Hossein Amirsadeghi. (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 4.

influence in the area in the 1950s could be attributed to a combination of factors. 'Most of these were in the form of indigenous nationalists and independence-orientated attitudes and sentiments that, by virtue of the western colonialist tradition, were basically anti-Western and were sweeping through the Arab countries.'<sup>149</sup>

Practically, the first major Soviet breakthrough into the western monopoly of arms supplies to the Middle East came with the 1955 Egyptian deal. It was a major Soviet arms deal to a non-Communist state, and Eisenhower viewed it "as the first evidence of serious Communist penetration in the Middle East."<sup>150</sup> Soviet – backed Egypt "seemed poised to become a major arms supplier to the region. Few doubted that Nasser would soon target Saudi Arabia, Syria and North African states."<sup>151</sup> Geoffrey Kemp stated "the USSR displayed a more provocative and irresponsible policy towards arms supplies to the Middle East than the US."<sup>152</sup> Remarkably, in the 1950s and 1960s the Soviet Union made extraordinary gains, increasing its political influence and improving its military position. But as one looks back on that period, "it was perhaps more extraordinary that the gains were not greater."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 24.

<sup>151</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 71.

<sup>152</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, "Strategy and Arms Levels," In *Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. Jacob C. Hurewitz (New York: Frederick A. Prager Publishers, 1969), 32.

<sup>153</sup> Campbell, "The Gulf Region in the Global setting." (1981), 4.

A close examination of Saudi Arabia and the USSR, so dissimilar in many ways, shows that they have steadily become more deeply politically and ideologically different from each other over the past decades. As a consequence, for the greater part of the period since the Soviet penetration of the Middle East in the mid-1950s, "Saudi Arabia has not really had to confront the Soviets directly, as Moscow did not seem to pose an immediate and concrete danger to the stability and the security of the House of Saud."<sup>154</sup> Yet, in spite of all the above, "the more the Soviets became involved in the region, the more differences became apparent between them and their local friends. Complications were due in no small measure to the significant psychological, cultural and social differences between the Soviets and Arabs."<sup>155</sup>

A cursory look at the Arab map through Soviet eyes revealed the scattered domains of a multitude of traditional tribe and monarchical entities lumped tighter and divided between the western powers. Whether in Iraq, Syria or Saudi Arabia, the picture appeared gloomy to Moscow.<sup>156</sup> Thus, until the mid 1950s the Soviet Union could no longer position itself as a proven key ally for Saudi Arabia. In other words, Moscow had less to offer and persuade Saudi Arabia as mediator or "global power." But why was Saudi Arabia now seeking ways of reducing tension with the Soviet Union? Why were the Soviets attempting to pursue a more revolutionary and explicitly anti-American policy than before?

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<sup>154</sup> Jacop Goldberg, Saudi Arabia's Attitude toward the USSR, 1977-1980: Between Saudi Pragmatism and Islamic Conservation," in *The USSR and the Muslims World*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London, Allen& Unwin, 1984), 262.

<sup>155</sup> Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula* (1983), 24.

<sup>156</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 23.

The answers to this question and Saudi's realization of its implications may be said to lie at the root of Saudi foreign policy, which appeared to concentrate on greater neutrality with superpowers rather than leading or following. As Bahgat Korany explained regarding Saudi traditional policy: "One of the basic components of Saudi foreign policy orientation is nonalignment."<sup>157</sup> Toward this end, the Saudis demonstrated extreme caution in dealing with the powers, feeling reluctant to take any risk that might embroil them in confrontation with superior forces.<sup>158</sup>

Additionally, I would argue that the Saudi king (King Saud) was predominantly a weak king who was still struggling to make his imprint on Saudi foreign policy. Add to that, "His Arab advisers in their ignorance and self-confidence would probably imagine themselves clever enough to keep the Communists easily out of Saudi Arabia."<sup>159</sup> Unlike Faisal, Saud's desire and attitude toward the superpowers concentrated on his interest in enabling him to survive in his position. Indeed, "his lack of enthusiasm and also interconnection had a direct negative impact on shaping Saudi concerns and considerations during the Cold War."<sup>160</sup> While conceding that the internal and external threats played a major role in forming Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War in particular the role of Saud, "he thus had to rely on Faisal even if Faisal's influence soon weakened."<sup>161</sup> Safran emphasized that "the way with which these threats were dealt had a

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<sup>157</sup> Bahgat Korany, "Defending the Faith amid Change: The Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia," in *The foreign Policy of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, ed. Bahgat Korany & Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (Boulder: West Press, 1984), 320.

<sup>158</sup> Goldberg, *The Foreign policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986), 178.

<sup>159</sup> PREM, FCO 11/943, 'Soviet overtures to Saudi Arabia', (1955).

<sup>160</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 171.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

formative influence on subsequent Saudi positions and behavior in the sphere of defense and security.”<sup>162</sup> The eminent scholar Steffen Hertog points out the crux perceptively, “Saud’s inability allowed his state to sprawl incoherently.”<sup>163</sup>

It is possible that Saud felt he had not consolidated his position sufficiently to make such a major break with Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War, and it is equally possible that Saud’s relation to other regional powers and actors was based upon the retention of state power over Saudi society. In reality, Saud’s own inexperience in foreign policy made his task all the more difficult, as did the lack of any precedent set by Ibn Saud “his father”, who had not faced a similar situation. “Saud thus had to rely on Faisal, who had a great deal more personal experience with international policy.”<sup>164</sup>

Still the Soviet behavior in the Middle East was not really mysterious. It was related very consistently and logically to an overall context of the continued Soviet attempt to change the world’s perception of the Soviet-American power balance.<sup>165</sup> As Adeed Dawisha pointed out, “the Soviet interest in the area was no less ‘imperialistic’ than those of the United States, Britain or France: the Soviet Union was perceived at the popular level as a friendly and supportive power, simply because it was backing the indigenous nationalist forces.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 73

<sup>163</sup> Hertog, *Princes, Brokers and Business* (2010), 61.

<sup>164</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 171

<sup>165</sup> Ismet Giritli, *Superpowers in the Middle East* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Fakülteler Matbaası, 1972), 33.

<sup>166</sup> Dawisha, “The Soviet Union in the Arab World.” (1982), 10.

However, it was clear that the Soviet Union's policy didn't share the same ideational beliefs and characteristics with the Middle Eastern states and particularly the pro-western conservative states principally Saudi Arabia.<sup>167</sup> But, re-entering the regional arena in the Middle East had become a desirable objective for Soviet leaders after the 1950s and 1960s, "in particular to the Gulf states close to Soviet territory and far from the United States, which was forming blocs, sending arms and military missions that could support attacks on the Soviet Union."<sup>168</sup>

It was in this period Andrej Kreutz argued "that the USSR's renewed interest in the region was mainly a reaction to the Eisenhower administration's efforts to organize an anti-Soviet alliance, (known as the Baghdad Pact<sup>169</sup>), at its southern borders."<sup>170</sup> Moscow, in the meantime, perceived the pact as a plot from the Western powers to surround them and asked the Arabs not to join the pact.<sup>171</sup> These Anglo-American efforts to bolster Western security and roll back communism in the Middle East sparked a backlash at the pinnacle of the Cold War among the western allies in the region, specifically, as Ismael put it "the

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<sup>167</sup> As Vassiliev argued, "anti-communism corresponded to the Saudi elite's ideological stance. It was understood in peculiar form " communism was supposed to be connected with Zionism and, moreover, to use the Orthodox Church as a tool of its penetration". Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 344.

<sup>168</sup> Campbell, "The Gulf Region in the Global setting." (1981), 2.

<sup>169</sup> A military pact created by Anglo-American efforts to bolster Western security in the Middle East. For a detailed account of the Baghdad pact see: Ara Sanjian, *Turkey and the Arab neighbors 1953-1958: A study in the origins of the failure of Baghdad pact* (Slough: Achieve edition, 1988); Elie Podehi, *The quest for hegemony in the Arab World: The Struggle over the Baghdad Pact* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>170</sup> Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East* (2007), 126.

<sup>171</sup> Al-Mosa'ed, "USSR- Gulf Relations." (1983), 82.



formation of the pact coincided with Israel's raid on the Gaza Strip."<sup>172</sup> In addition, "many Middle Easterners felt Western influence was too dominating and they wanted change."<sup>173</sup> In spite of being ultra-conservative and anti-communist, the Saudi rulers rejected participation in the new American initiative, "which could have allied them with traditional and hostile Iran, and could also have antagonized Arab feelings of nationalism."<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, the Baghdad pact was a landmark in the whole of the Middle East and not only on Saudi Arabian foreign policy. The pact had been the vanguard of the main strategies made by the US to confront the communist threat. Additionally, the policy of containment was applied in the global context. Its high ideological content included the conviction that communist aggregation or expansion, as John Campbell stated, "must not be allowed to succeed anywhere, lest it eventually succeed everywhere."<sup>175</sup>

The Saudis did not want to become involved directly in superpower confrontation or basing-treaty arrangements that limited their ability to maneuver diplomatically in the region.<sup>176</sup> While Saudi Arabia did not participate

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<sup>172</sup> Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations of the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 172.

<sup>173</sup> Julie Kretschmar, "The Baghdad Pact," *Texas State Undergraduate Research Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015), 355.

<sup>174</sup> Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East* (2007), 126. ; Jousua Pollack, "Saudi Arabia and the United States, 1931-2002," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 6(September: 2002), 79; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 60.

<sup>175</sup> Campbell, "The Gulf Region in the Global setting." (1981), 2.

<sup>176</sup> John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2002), 202; Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Gulf and the search for strategic stability: Saudi Arabia, the*

in this agreement,<sup>177</sup> the Saudi approach had been generally to avoid getting caught up in their affairs. Abir emphasizes that “Saudi perceived the Baghdad pact as a threat to the existence of the kingdom.”<sup>178</sup>

The policy pursued by Saudis in fighting the Baghdad Pact also “threatened to damage the American connection, which the founder of Saudi Arabia “Ibn Saud” had carefully nurtured in security and military assistance as well as in oil development.”<sup>179</sup> The failure of the Baghdad pact gave Russia its opportunity to prove the western assumption wrong, ‘which assumed that the USSR would not offer modern arms to non-communists in the Middle East.’<sup>180</sup>

From a historical standpoint, however, the most remarkable aspect of the Soviet policies was that they became more aggressive in the Arab world when Soviet military support went to Egypt<sup>181</sup> and other radical regimes during the 1950s sought to exploit the differences with Western powers on the dispute over Israel.

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military balance in the Gulf, and trends in the Arab-Israeli military balance (London: Mansell, 1984), 102.

<sup>177</sup> According to John Campbell, “Saudi Arabia never joined any American-sponsored regional security system directed against the USSR, but by its congenital anti-Communism and its special relationships with the United States it played its part in shaping the superpowers balance in the gulf region”. Campbell, “The Gulf Region in the Global setting.” (1981), 16.

<sup>178</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era: Regime and Elites; Conflict and Collaboration* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 70.

<sup>179</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 79-80

<sup>180</sup> Jacop C. Hurewitz, “Origins of the Rivalry,” in *Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. Jacop .C Hurewitz (New York: Columbia University, 1969), 9.

<sup>181</sup> The breakthrough for Moscow was in 1955, when Nasser signed a major arms deal with the Czechs and, one year later, the USSR agreed to help in building the Aswan Dam after the West refused to provide assistance. This deal, according to Fred Halliday, “paved the way for a series of other agreements over the next decade and a half with the self-proclaimed anti-imperialist regimes of the Arab World.” Fred Halliday, *Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis* (Washington D.C.; Institute for Policy Studies, 1981), 58.

As Johan Simon noted, “Moscow was quick to identify with Arab aspirations in an effort to undermine American positions in the Middle East,”<sup>182</sup> and that was to a certain extent intended also to strengthen the Soviet position in the 1950s in the Arab world, and made the Saudi leadership extremely worried about these ambitions and the imminence of any superficial conflict.

The United States reacted with alarm to the Soviet ambitions and also to the evidence that the most populous and powerful of all the Arab states had now fallen under Soviet influence. The meant it chose was a campaign to strengthen the conservative regimes of the Arab world through what was soon christened the Eisenhower Doctrine.<sup>183</sup> The latter pledged to assist any Middle Eastern nation facing the threat of Communist aggression; which could bring stability to the Middle East. Hereby, “the ideal choice was Saudi Arabia to provide the political leadership in the Arab World to use the monarchy’s religious legitimacy as a means of gaining support for the American policy in the region.”<sup>184</sup> The Saudis and Americans agreed eventually to a post strike based from which to defend against Soviet attacks since “there was little certainty and debate around Soviet intentions in the Middle East.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Johan. B. Simon, *Small States as Major power: A Case study of Saudi Arabia*, (PhD diss., 1980: George Washington University), 186.

<sup>183</sup>. David Holden & Richard Johnes, *The House of Saud* (London, Sidgwick & Jackson: 1981), 190; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 60; Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa‘ūd, and the Making of U.S-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 117-125.

<sup>184</sup> Miglitta, *American Alliance policy*, (2002), 222; Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999) 217.

<sup>185</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 57.

Although the interests of the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia frequently coincided as regards major world issues, the Saudi leaders “deep-seated” mistrust of Moscow prevented them from starting even a formal dialogue with the USSR or establishing normal diplomatic relations, thus weakening Saudi Arabia’s international relations.<sup>186</sup> As the foreign office wrote: “I think it almost certain that for reasons of self-interest and religion, King Saud would prefer to avoid Communist relations... even if the Russian ambassador also hinted at a non-aggression pact to guarantee Saudi Arabia where the king refused to give an audience to the Russian Ambassador.”<sup>187</sup>

Accordingly, Saudi Arabia had increasingly come to support U.S. policies in the Middle East and elsewhere, albeit its proclaimed positive neutrality. The visit of King Saud to the US in 1957 “was the fear that the Soviet Union would use the situation to increase its influence in the Middle East and in response the US evolved the Eisenhower Doctrine.”<sup>188</sup> Thus, “as the doctrine was prompted by fear of a Soviet move to fill the “vacuum” created by the collapse of British and French influence in the Middle East in the wake of Suez fiasco,”<sup>189</sup> from its inception, the doctrine had the objectives of filling the existing vacuum in the Middle East with the US and breaking Russian influence.

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<sup>186</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 344.

<sup>187</sup> PREM, FCO 11/943, ‘*Soviet overtures to Saudi Arabia*’, (1955).

<sup>188</sup> Fred Halliday, *Arab without Sultan* (1974), 54.

<sup>189</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 82

The Eisenhower doctrine looked at Saudi Arabia to provide leadership in the Arab world and illustrate a pro-Western model for other Arab states. Indeed, “King Saud was viewed by Washington D.C. as the ideal choice to play the role of anti-communist leader who could provide legitimacy for the American role in the Middle East. This legitimacy derived largely from his position within the Islamic world as the Guardian (Custodian)<sup>190</sup> of the holy places,”<sup>191</sup> or as Rachel Bronson called it: “An Islamic Pope”.<sup>192</sup>

King Saud endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine through which “the Eisenhower administration hoped to bring stability to the Middle East.”<sup>193</sup> As such, “Saud accepted the role presented to him by the Eisenhower administration whereby he decided to cast his lot with Washington, hoping to lead the region against Communism and Arab nationalism.”<sup>194</sup> In his solid research for Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and 1960s, Vitalis came to the understanding that “the Eisenhower Doctrine was an attempt to promote the new Saudi King as a rival to the region’s charismatic, increasingly popular and powerful Egyptian leader Jamal Abdul-Nasser.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> The word ‘Guardian’ has been vehemently criticized inside Saudi Arabia as being a Western invention with the pejorative connotation and also has no equivalent in the Saudi or Arabic contexts. I therefore prefer to use the word (Custodian) as the Saudi kings identify themselves by this title officially.

<sup>191</sup> Miglietta, *American Alliance policy* (2002), 204.

<sup>192</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 61.

<sup>193</sup> Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 217.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>195</sup> Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 163.

Hence, the doctrine gave the US the right to “use force and lend support to any Middle Eastern country seeking assistance against open aggression by any country under the control of International Communism.”<sup>196</sup> Saud supported the doctrine and promised to help promote it in the Arab World, but failed to win approval for this doctrine.<sup>197</sup> This failure ‘reverted Saudi Arabia to its traditional policy of “neutralism in Arab affairs” and the US also followed the policy of nonalignment, however, the Soviets leadership skillfully exploited the regional polarization in the Middle East. ‘<sup>198</sup>

This development enabled the USSR to make imperialism the first enemy of the Arabs and this made it easy for them to be seen as the loyal friend of Arabs in their wars against colonialism and capitalism.<sup>199</sup> In the same vein, communism portrayed itself as the only force that would liberate the Palestinian territories, expel Israel and provided Arab republicans the wherewithal to stand against the backward monarchy and its western brokers.<sup>200</sup> Notwithstanding, for a country whose foreign policy was proclaimed by its leaders to be based on the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism, the Soviet Union had its fair share of setbacks in the Near and the Middle East.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 82.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 83; Simon, “Small States as Major powers.” (1980), 181.

<sup>198</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, “ Soviet American Rivalry in the Middle East,” in *The Middle East Reader*, ed. Michael Curtis (New Brunswick U.S.A: Transaction Books, 1986), 407.

<sup>199</sup> Sālim, al Fāiṣāl: malikan fī fikr Ummāh (1976), 155.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Karen Alford, “The Correlation of Forces and Soviet Policy,” in *The Soviet Union in The Middle East Policies and perspectives*, ed. Adeed Dawisha& Karen Dawisha. (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1982), 147.

The contradiction was manifest in Saudi policy in dealing with the superpowers and made it between opportunistic and apprehensive, which might substantiate the argument that, I made early in the first chapter, that the security of the state has been the overriding concern of the Saudi royal family. It was probable that Riyadh did not feel that the Soviets were not in a strong position to consolidate their strategies and make such a major break with Saudi foreign policy. Nor have the Soviets been able to bring a shift in Saudi foreign policy from close relations with the United States to neutrality between the superpowers; then 'Moscow was unable to exploit any potential difference between Riyadh and Washington over foreign policy issues during the Cold War.'<sup>202</sup>

The question then is raised: What was, historically, the dominant role of Saudi policy from the outset of the Cold War? Sarah Yizraeli has attempted to 'distinguish between the defense of the dynasty and the defense of the Saudi territory, which was gradually becoming blurred, pointing to external threats which came to be seen as something the kingdom had to recognize, face and counter.'<sup>203</sup> I would argue that this is mostly true in terms of dealing with the Soviet threat, less so on other threats. This may partly explain the traditional hostility towards the Soviets and the anti-Soviet trend of Saudi foreign policy that laid the grounds for a non-alignment and non-rapprochement, which resulted in a systematic policy restricted to, dealing with the Kremlin.

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<sup>202</sup> Katz, *Russia and Arabia* (1986), 154.

<sup>203</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 163- 171

While the Saudi royal family has never been under attack by the Soviet Union, it had “a fixed ideological aversion to communism and a tendency to equate it with forces of radical change that were a more immediate threat to the existing system.”<sup>204</sup>

In general, Saudi-Soviet rapprochements were considered very cold most of the time, ‘with a sporadic period of outright enmity or relative calm and friendliness. Besides the exchange of congratulatory letters on official occasions, no major changes in the relations took place.’<sup>205</sup> In theory, behind the Saudi attitude and policy in this period towards the USSR in the mid-1950s rested two assumptions. Firstly, it might be possible to deduce that the Saudi government recognized the reality of the communist threat and the Soviet’s ability to mold Arab opinion. Accordingly, the Saudis sought to advance the containment doctrine by exerting its influence and aid over communist tendencies and Arab nationalist regimes, which appeared hostile and did not create a situation more favorable to Saudi interests.

Consequently, this transformed the style with which Saudi Arabia had endeavored to place its short-term foreign policy strategy of “cautious attention” during the Cold War with the USSR. Goldberg captured the gist of this cautious policy by articulating that “the extreme anti-Soviet posture of the Saudis and

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<sup>204</sup> Campbell, “The Gulf Region in the Global setting.” (1981),15.

<sup>205</sup> Al- Mosā‘d, “USSR-Gulf relations.” (1985), 125.



their strong condemnation of Soviet ideology and strategy did not actually necessitate the adoption of active, conspicuous anti-Soviet policies.”<sup>206</sup>

To that end, Saudi Arabia in the 1950s maintained official, diplomatic correspondence with the Soviets in order to prevent any Saudi-Soviet skirmishes which if they had happened, would have led to weakening the consolidation institutionally of the nascent Saudi state at that time.<sup>207</sup> In this respect, an argument can be also mounted that a series of domestic crises inside the royal family between Faisal the crown prince and King Saud provided the occasion for efforts in and out of Saudi Arabia to push the country in one direction.

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<sup>206</sup> Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia’s Attitude toward the USSR.” (1984), 262.

<sup>207</sup> For more in the correspondences between Moscow and Riyadh that have original information and change letters regarding Saudi- Russian relations of almost 12 pages. See: PREM, FCO 11/943, ‘*Soviet overtures to Saudi Arabia*’, 26 August 1955.

**The Emergence of opposition: Saudi attitudes, actions and strategies:**

This part does not deal “directly” with the emergence of all oppositions in Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s, continuing to the late 1960s and its implications for Saudi attitude towards its policy inside and outside the kingdom during the Cold War. Rather, I will pay adequate attention and analysis to how all the oppositions, with special emphasis on the nascent communist opposition, contributed to strengthening and widening the Saudi aggressive attitude to Soviets on all fronts, which in turn served to destroy all these activities and preserve the state inside.

As a general background to the emergence of the opposition in Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s, one may see cascades of different opposition emerging at that time, which attempted to mobilize public sentiment. “Dissidences took shape in nationalist, socialist and liberal forms, and the new professional class sought a voice in a country dominated by the elite of the royal family.”<sup>208</sup> As one scholar explained, “even though these left-wing organizations drew their members from ARAMCO workers, they were joined by students, school teachers, foreigners and middle-class people from urban areas.”<sup>209</sup>

To be sure, not all the oppositions shared the same aim, which was anti-imperialism and pro-communism, as Vassiliev construed it, “their ideology was a

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<sup>208</sup> Abukhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 94.

<sup>209</sup> Michal G. Nehme, “Saudi Arabia 1950-98: Between Nationalism and Religion,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 4 (1994), 936.

jumble of Nasserist, Bathist and communist slogans,”<sup>210</sup> but the feeling of modernization and reforms were a recurrent themes during the 1950s among communism in the Arab World generally ‘as an approach to post-colonial liberation to explain the Arab social, economic and political realities.’<sup>211</sup>

Galia Golan thus acknowledged the existence of Arab communist opposition during the Cold War in most of the Middle Eastern countries. As she noted, “communist parties have emerged but rarely been legal anywhere in the region and in the more conservative Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia.”<sup>212</sup> Why then have the scholarly analyses generally tended to underestimate this opposition and its implications for Saudi policy toward the USSR? The answer to this is perhaps linked to their respective politics of identity of the opposition. By focusing almost entirely on Arab nationalism as the sole powerful opposition inside Saudi Arabia, the scholars missed out on the communist and other oppositions. This is perhaps another instance of how vague or insufficient studies were before the oil embargo, to which I alluded in my first chapter.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 190.

<sup>211</sup> Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 2005), Preface.

<sup>212</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies* (1990), 217.

<sup>213</sup> Vassiliev pointed out to this fact also in his book: Saudi Arabia, (2000), 60-64; Also Toby Matthiesen revised the previous literature of the Saudi oppositions in the 1950s and explained nicely that “one reason for this relative scarcity of material is that the Saudi dissidents never wrote official histories, nor did they archive their publications and pamphlets in a systematic way.” Toby Matthiesen, “Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks: Labour Movements and Opposition Groups in Saudi Arabia, 1950–1975,” *International Review of Social History* 59, no. 03 (December 2014): 474, doi:10.1017/S0020859014000455.

Although 'the immediate threat of revolutionary and socialist forms of Arab nationalism came to an end with the Israel victory over Egypt in 1967, the sense of opposition continued to challenge the state's legitimacy afterwards.'<sup>214</sup> Yet the re-emergence of leftist movements (not particularly nationalist) was interpreted both in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world as indicating that Egypt's role in the Arab world had been diminished and suggests far more congruence divergence between the opposition. Nonetheless, the leftist organizations' work and activities of the 1950s casted light on some of the main questions raised in this study: To what extent could the Soviet Union collaborate with local oppositions (Communists), and pay attention to them? And also how could these activities from the oppositions shape the relations between Riyadh and Moscow?

As such, the weight of evidence suggests that the notion of opposition in Saudi Arabia appeared even before the arrival of Faisal in office. But suffice to say the political impotence of Saud and subsequently the difference between Faisal and Saud vastly accelerated the Saudis trend towards the opposition inside the Kingdom. In many ways, the emergence of opposition disputes was a product of Saud's time, who came to power in 1953 and, as Alexander Bligh put it, "had neither vision nor definitive policies regarding the future of Saudi Arabia."<sup>215</sup>

It was that throughout the early 1950s, that internal and external developments were changing the domestic politics and consequently the foreign policy of Saudi

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<sup>214</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2014), 57.

<sup>215</sup> Alexander Bligh, *The Interplay between Opposition Activity in Saudi Arabia and Recent Trends in the Arab World* (Jerusalem: The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, 1984), 67.

Arabia during the Cold War. Thus, it has been argued “the way in which these threats were dealt with had a formative influence on subsequent Saudi positions and behavior in the sphere of defense and security.”<sup>216</sup> Thereby, as a scholar rightly explained “the weakness of the ruler and his ambivalent policies, the struggle for power within the royal family, presented the Saudi opposition “nationalists and communists” with the opportunity to expand its activities practically unchecked.”<sup>217</sup> In contrast to other oppositions such as Arab Nationalism or Bathi, “the communist opposition sought to advance socialist or communist values with Islam to reach out to the large number of Saudi citizens.”<sup>218</sup>

Broadly speaking, the sense of opposition in Saudi Arabia was influenced by the turmoil of the Arab World in the 1950s. As William Rugh noted regarding the political landscape among citizens in Saudi Arabia during the 1950s, ‘political activity on the national level was fairly intense among the middle class’<sup>219</sup> which shaped the aspirations of a small-educated group in Saudi Arabia. In this vein, the British Embassy in Washington began reporting about Communism in Saudi Arabia in the beginning of the 1950s and observed via ex-United States naval officer who worked in Aramco that “a considerable amount of Communist literature in Arabic was circulating clandestinely in Saudi Arabia and that

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<sup>216</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 73.

<sup>217</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1986), 49.

<sup>218</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*,’ 4 March 1949.

<sup>219</sup> William Rugh, “Emergence of a New Middle Class in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Journal* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1973), 12.

pictures of Stalin could be found in houses and 'somewhat improbably' in Bedouin tents."<sup>220</sup>

Thereby, in the late 1940s and early 1950s "a new political vocabulary was appearing in Saudi Arabia, which was the language of "coups", "revolutions" and social justice, all far removed from the social context of Arabia at the time."<sup>221</sup> Toby Matthiesen observed insightfully "since the 1940s, members of the local upper class and employees in the nascent oil industry received a modern education either in Bahrain or in the intellectual centers of the Arab world such as Baghdad, Beirut, or Cairo. There they became familiar with the ideas of Arab nationalism and communism."<sup>222</sup> Accordingly, 'the Eastern Province experienced widespread strikes and the influence of a whole range of secular leftist movements and ideas, from Nasserists and Baathists to Communism and socialists.'<sup>223</sup>

Matthiesen also outlined that as "a general sense of radical politics spread in the labor camps of ARAMCO, the emerging oil towns of Dammam and Jubail, and the community centers of the Shia port city of Qatif."<sup>224</sup> As such, the oil fields in the Eastern province were the beginnings of an unskilled proletariat "that was

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<sup>220</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, 'Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism'. (1949).

<sup>221</sup> Al-Rasheed, *A history of Saudi Arabia* (2002), 108 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC* (2002), 79. When President Nasser of Egypt visited Āl-ẓāhrān in Saudi Arabia for the meeting with King Saud, stones were thrown at the royal entourage and slogans denouncing the House of al-Saud were displayed by some of the demonstrations. Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1993), 38.

<sup>222</sup> Matthiesen, "Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks." (2014), 477.

<sup>223</sup> Matthiesen, *The Shias of Saudi Arabia: Identity Politics, Sectarianism and the Saudi State* (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2012), 158.

<sup>224</sup> Matthiesen, "Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks." (2014), 478.

dangerously enough to make a considerable degree of Communist activities possible.”<sup>225</sup> Accordingly, the import of foreign labor, which happened to be in the majority from other Arab states, by the influx of Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian professionals, technicians and workers<sup>226</sup> undoubtedly contributed a great deal of influence towards urban Saudi citizens, exposing them to new values and different outlooks. As John Chalcraft argued “the encounter between Saudi nationals and certain Arab migrants operated here among the rank and file to politicize the former and to involve them in strikes.”<sup>227</sup>

Indeed “the migrants spread a sense of dissatisfaction among Saudis, as most of these best-educated of Arabs later became political activists.”<sup>228</sup> It is likely that this political climate was focused on all kind of oppositions generally and on nationalism and communism in particular. Meanwhile, Nāif al-Hāndās illustrated the forbidden political literature under which ‘Saudi society witnessed the arrival of left-wing ideas through the Arab staff who were present in abundance at the time in the fields of education, health, oil companies and other Palestinians and Egyptians, Lebanese and those who bring with them the preparation of magazines and newspapers such as the communist newspaper.’<sup>229</sup> The document from the British Embassy insinuated, “It is perhaps too much to hope that there will not be more Communist activity in the future. It is not impossible, for

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<sup>225</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949).

<sup>226</sup> Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 183.

<sup>227</sup> John Chalcraft, “Migration and Popular Protest in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf in the 1950s and 1960s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79, no. 01 (2011): 40, doi:10.1017/S014754791000030X.

<sup>228</sup> Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 148.

<sup>229</sup> Nāif al-Hndās, “Al-Hizb Al-Shuyu’i Al-Sa’udi”, 9 April 2014. At <http://www.almqaal.com/?p=3344>. Accessed (31 August 2014).

instance, that some of the refugees from the professional and clerical classes of Palestine who have come here may become more disgruntled than they are at present and sourly “go red” on us in resentment of British and American policy over Palestine; and the danger will be greater if and when the Soviet Union changes the part line to one of the ostentations support and sympathy with the Arabs.”<sup>230</sup>

However, “the limited number of sources available and the widespread use of pseudonyms in publications make it difficult to identify systematically actors present both in the dissident milieus and the subsequent in AMRACO labor mobilizations.”<sup>231</sup> As such, the State Department inferred that “the strike in the Oil Sector of Aramco was quite possibly Communist inspired.”<sup>232</sup> Accordingly, ARAMCO was the one of key outlets of leftists and Communists to have their communiqués and leaflets circulated during this period.<sup>233</sup>

As one scholar argued, “the 1953 ARAMCO strike was an important milestone in the re-emergence of militant opposition to the Al-Saud government Anti-government over-tones became apparent in the later stages of the strike and the workers, despite the many concessions they had won, remained discontented and critical of the regime.”<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949).

<sup>231</sup> Matthiesen, “Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks.” (2014), 487.

<sup>232</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949).

<sup>233</sup> For more detail about the role of Aramco and its impact on the leftist, Arab Nationalism, and Communist organization see: Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom* (2007). 88-139; PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949).

<sup>234</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1993), 34.



Moreover, “social distress was visible in al-ḥāsa, where a combination of poor treatment of workers from ARAMCO and other social crises within the local communities led to public demonstrations of anti-Saudi sentiment.”<sup>235</sup> The level of political involvement including the call for a constitution, the legitimization of political parties and national organizations, was, in Alex Vassiliev’s word, “far from widespread among the workers of al-ḥāsa.”<sup>236</sup> As such, increasing demands for the rule of law and social justice were a recurrent feature through all of these activities and perhaps also played a role in pointing out that the true meaning of democracy was not granting bourgeois-democracy liberties, but liberation from class oppression. ‘While the Saudi King Saud was still living in Arabia’s past, Saudi Arabia was drastically beginning to witness a taste of new types of conflicts among new forces and new tendencies.’<sup>237</sup>

Subsequently, foreigners were attracted by the enthusiasm for some Saudis demands in ARAMCO in the 1950s and became close to, or formed part of, the Communist opposition. Bligh stressed the importance of dissent in Saudi Arabia, postulating that, “the feelings against the regime were shared by many workers in the oil fields.”<sup>238</sup> Yet, they protested not only against Aramco’s labor politics but also ‘towards their government’s close relations with the U.S.’<sup>239</sup> The State Department knew that “ARAMCO was very strict about security and they thought that the Saudi Arabian government was also very much on the watch for

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<sup>235</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 60.

<sup>236</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 337.

<sup>237</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949); Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 183.

<sup>238</sup> Bligh, *The Interplay between Opposition Activity in Saudi Arabia* (1984), 67.

<sup>239</sup> Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC* (2002), 100.

agents.”<sup>240</sup> The Saudi government started ‘deporting more foreign-born workers and also stripped nationalists of Saudis, who the government suspected of disloyalty or interest in forming a labor union.’<sup>241</sup>

From the sequence of events forces suppressed the strike in 1953 and more than 200 men were arrested. The king subsequently issued a decree making strikes a punishable offence with a possible death penalty.<sup>242</sup> On the other hand, in order to reach a short-term solution, “the king also ordered the workers to return to work and the striker’s leaders were released from jail.”<sup>243</sup> Those new types of conflicts were manifested clearly in ARAMCO whose workers went on strike twice.<sup>244</sup> At the time, however, “Sa‘ud and the Saudi leadership continued to reprimand and describe these activities of the opposition from Aramco as communists.”<sup>245</sup>

These circumstances led to resentment especially among dissidents, which culminated in several anti-monarchy demonstrations, which facilitated by the influx of Arabs and foreigners in Saudi Arabia in a transitional era from the 1940s until the 1960s. I, therefore, argue that the strike gave the Saudi government, to a significant degree, a certain amount of breathing space during these demonstrations at the beginning of 1953, particularly as these protests

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<sup>240</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘*Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’, (1949).

<sup>241</sup> Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom* (2007), 154.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>243</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era*, (1988); 73-74 ; Holden & Johnes, *The House of Saud*, (1981), 194-195.

<sup>244</sup> Michel Mehme, “Saudi Arabia: Political implication of the development plan” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1983), 55-56.

<sup>245</sup> Bligh, *The Interplay between Opposition Activity in Saudi Arabia* (1984), 67.

were not considered to be homegrown by the Saudis. At the same time, it is fair to say that the Saudi attitude towards the Soviet Union became increasingly hostile in the middle of the 1950s, due to domestic instability and the growing fear of political opposition inside Saudi Arabia, particularly with anti-monarchal slogans found painted on places in Riyadh, the bastion of the Saudi royal family.<sup>246</sup>

The 1956, second labor strike, however, “sparked (officially) communist organizations and produced the communist-leaning Reform Front, which later became into the Communist Party in 1970.”<sup>247</sup> This did not mean, however, that communism had not prevailed till 1956, but it can be assumed that in the period from the first strike in 1953 to the second in 1956 the communist party inside the kingdom developed their strategies and were looking for help from inside or outside to assert their demands.

Outside communist penetration of Saudi Arabia and the Eastern Arabia contributed to a momentum in communism and leftism inside Saudi Arabia. These efforts culminated in cementing alliances among the communists in the Gulf region, particularly from Bahrain, and leftist ideas as concepts and converted to the demands on the ground.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Holden & Johnes, *The House of Saud* (1981), 183.

<sup>247</sup> ‘Adb-un-Nabi- Nabil Al-‘Akri, *At-ṭanẓemāt Al-ysāryh fī al-Jāzzerāh wa-al-kālīj Al-‘ārbi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kunoz Al-Adābiyyah, 2003), 46.

<sup>248</sup> al-Hndās, “al-Hizb al-Shuyu’i al-Sa’udi.” (2014).

Additionally, "Bahrain also served as a place for the organization of strikes and protests and the strengthening of clandestine networks."<sup>249</sup> Thus, the notion of creating the Communist party opposition came mainly from the Bahraini Communists, who gave and exchanged their experiences after the 1956 strike, which came from the creation the Front of National Liberation in Bahrain. The Communist party in Saudi Arabia did not just benefit from the Front National Liberation in Bahrain but also, according to Adb-un-Nabi- Nabil Al-‘Akri, "The structure and orientation of the Saudi Communist party were shaped by the Bahraini national liberation front."<sup>250</sup>

Besides this, as I mentioned before, foreigners were also influential in promoting the notion of the communist ideology in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the overall goals of the Communist party, as Toby Matthiesen puts it "were national reforms and officially, its base was the working class although its members mainly stemmed from the intelligentsia."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ' *Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism* ' (1949); Matthiesen, "Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks." (2014), 486.

<sup>250</sup> Al-‘Akri, *At-ṭanzemāt Al-ysāryh fi al-Jāzzerāh* (2003), 46.

<sup>125</sup> Matthiesen, "The Shias of Saudi Arabia." (2012),177.



*"The Flag of the Communist party in Saudi Arabia"* <sup>252</sup>

Likewise, in 1958, the National Liberation Front emerged in Saudi Arabia, and the Communist members increasingly influenced this front until it became known as the Communist Organization in the late 1960s.<sup>253</sup> Remarkably, 'Shi'ias constituted the majority of the Saudi Communist party and other ideological oppositions who appeared to have an anti-Saudi stance and mirrored anti-imperialism, since all of these activities took place before the advent of the Iranian revolution.'<sup>254</sup> Therefore naturally, the impact of these movements was that "the Eastern province became a natural focus for action of that kind."<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> al-Hndās, "Al-Hizb Al-Shuyu'i Al-Sa'udi.",(2014).

<sup>253</sup> Al-'Akri, *At-ṭanzemāt Al-ysāryh*, (2003), 46-47.

<sup>254</sup> Matthiesen, "Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks." (2014), 480.

<sup>255</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi* (2002), 337.

These actions were described by the Saudi Shia author, Hāmzh-al-Hāsn, who emphasized the fact that the Shia regions and people were prolific ground for the majority of the demonstrations taking place in Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. Hence Al-Hāsn mentions the fact that, “Shias were the bulk of the members of the Saudi communist party, and also Ba’th party.”<sup>256</sup> As a result, the scope of those activities was largely limited to one geographic area of Saudi Arabia, and that was the Eastern province, and principally with Shias citizens.

From the late 1950s until the collapse of the Soviet Union, communist organizations operated in small cells within the Kingdom.<sup>257</sup> Undoubtedly, there were a number of Saudi opposition groups, who were mainly reformist, such as the Labor Committee and Liberal Party and Reform Party who “called for a constitutional monarchy.”<sup>258</sup> The known organizations were: The National Reform Front (NRF), which was formed in 1956 by a group of communists and former members of the workers’ committee and was more extreme than other opposition groups. The Union of People of the Arabian Peninsula (UPAP), “which was formed in 1958, according to Nasserist ideology, the Ba’ath Party and in 1963 became the largest opposition group.”<sup>259</sup> However, the rise of this opposition did not mean that they shared the same political objectives, from

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<sup>256</sup> Hāmzh al-Hāsn, “‘lāqāt al Sh‘iah –as-S‘udiyyah al-Kārjeāh& Madhhbiyyah wa Siāysiyyān,” *Al-Jazzerah*. Net, October 10, 2004. At <http://www.aljazeera.net/specialfiles/pages/aafc23ce-874b-4814-9956-0c0923a8b555>. (Accessed 28 February 2014).

<sup>257</sup> As’sd, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, (2004), 165.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 165-166; Katz, *Russia& Arabia* (1986), 141; Holden & Johnes, *The House of Al-Saud* (1981), 182-188;

<sup>259</sup> Turki Al ḥāmd, “Political order in changing society: Saudi Arabia: modernization in traditional context”, (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California:1985),127.

essential political reforms to constitutional monarchy, and these differences added to the difficulties they face, which the regime skillfully managed and diminished all the opposition. According to Mark Katz, "Soviet writers were favorable to these groups but become more interested in the NRF, which was founded in 1956 and then changed its name to "the Saudi Arabian National Liberation front" in 1958 (ANLF), which advocated political reform and became progressively more radical in its pronouncements."<sup>260</sup> The (ANLF) and its leftist leanings militancy and rooted "in the oil industry and in the armed forces and among a few Najdi tribal elements made the ANLF exceptionally dangerous to the government."<sup>261</sup> Add to that, "The Saudi ANLF moved further left from Nasserite of Arab nationalism and became ideologically related to the Marxist South Yemeni NLF and the Palestinian Liberation Fronts."<sup>262</sup> As Samlā notes "The Communists decided it would be more to their advantage to maintain a presence at the heart of ANLF, while acting autonomously through a secret group formed in Beirut-the organization of Saudi Communists."<sup>263</sup>

The ANLF, however, 'in 1962 joined forces with the Marxist Saudi Arabian National Liberation Front (SANLF) and Moscow saw this move as the beginning of a united front consisting of the Saudi proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and liberal feudals.'<sup>264</sup> Yet, the ANLF collapsed, thereby dashing any Soviet expectations that disgruntled members of the Royal Family might effectively cooperate with more

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<sup>260</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 141

<sup>261</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1988), 35

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ghassan Salama, "Political power and Saudi State," in *The Modern Middle East A reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Anglos: University of California Press, 1993), 597.

<sup>264</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 140.

radical groups.<sup>265</sup> The Communist parties in the Arab World also ‘made a few attempts to cooperate with all the opponents to the Saudi regime during the Cold War and among them were Nāṣir Al-sa‘īd.’<sup>266</sup>

Nāṣir Al-sa‘īd, founded the organization Union of the People of Arabia (Ittiḥād Sha‘b al-Jazirah al-‘Arabīyah), “which was mainly active abroad.”<sup>267</sup> Aramco inquires showed that “Al-said had visited the Soviet Union in 1957 and circumstantial evidence gives ground to suspect the existence of some clandestine organizations among Aramco’s workers which maintains liaisons, with the outside world.”<sup>268</sup> Yet, later on this organization rejected cooperation with the communist party and worked alone.<sup>269</sup> These initiatives from the leftists and communists in Saudi Arabia were widely seen as ways of combating the imperialist and conservative rulers of Saudi Arabia.<sup>270</sup> Thus, neither advocates of communists nor nationalists contested the regime’s power and legitimacy. Instead, they diverged in their demands about reform or change,

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<sup>265</sup> Holden & Johnes, *The House of Al-Saud* (1981), 185-188.

<sup>266</sup> Nasser Al-s‘īd is a former striker leader at ARAMCO who escaped to Syria after attempting to form an Arabian Trade Union Association in 1956 and in 1958, he founded the oppositionist organization Union of the people of Arabia abroad. In December 1979, Al s‘īd was assassinated and accusation was directed to the Saudi Secret Service in the first place and CIA. Abir, *Saudi Arabia*, (1988), 34-36. & Matthias, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia*, (2014), 57; Holden, *The House Of Saud*, (1981), 188. ; Vitalis, *American’s Kingdom*, (2007) 179; Matthiesen, “Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks” (2014), 490; Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 217-226.

<sup>267</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1988), 35-36

<sup>268</sup> George Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1960), 285.

<sup>269</sup> Al-‘Akri, *At-ṭanzemāt Al-ysāryh* (2003), 47.

<sup>270</sup> These moves resulted later in the official creation of the toothless Communist Party in 1975, which sought to spread the values and interests of communism. Al-‘Akri, *At-ṭanzemāt Al-ysāryh fi* (2003), 47.



which represented the direct endpoint of the oppositions' ambition. One could well advance the argument that there was no desire on the part of the Saudi opposition and mainly the communists during the Cold War to emulate Egypt's or Syria's attempt to form a republican state or even a permanent opponent organization in rivalry with the royal family over power. While they became increasingly critical of the policies of the Saudi regime and its stances with its Arab sister countries, they never developed a personal revulsion to the Saudi regime not having a constitutional monarchy. This clearly suggests another factor related to the Saudi opposition that at least in the case of Saudi Arabia, in particular its opposition, the mere way to win support for their positions must come from within Saudi society, whereby they can affirm their visions and blueprints among the indigenous citizens.

It is meant here that the credibility of the communist opposition would have gained momentum if they cooperated with all the available progressive voices inside the kingdom in a combined effort to stem the rising tide of imperialism, rather than associate themselves altogether with the nationalist movements that were growing steadily in strength in the region. Still, communist opposition literature in the 1940s and 1950s, especially of the Saudi Communist party, "was filled with detailed critiques of the Saudi economy, tributes to the then motherland of communism, critiques of women's oppression in the Kingdom, and attacks on the Western orientation of the corrupt royal family."<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> As'sd, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2004), 165

Such, genres made it not surprising that the opposition sought to describe Al-Sāud as non-Muslim governors and expand these narratives over the Kingdom's provinces to reach out to the vast majority of the population.

Even "the Communist literature was confiscated and the suspects were interrogated,"<sup>272</sup> the opposition organizations "frequently openly defied the censorship and published articles promoting the cause of Arab nationalism- anti-imperialism leading indirectly to attacking the regime."<sup>273</sup> That is not to say that some publishers and editorialists were imprisoned and a few newspapers shuttered by the government. As result, "the government clamped down on dissent by closing newspapers, constraining opportunities for speech, restricting activities and considered threatening the press."<sup>274</sup> But, on the other hand, the Saudi authorities 'tolerated the young media and publishing writing for a few years because they had limited experience with critical press.'<sup>275</sup>

Thereafter, however, the Saudi state attracted foreign authors who helped the state historiography and also developed an exclusivism history of the Royal family as true Muslims.<sup>276</sup> Thereupon, Matthias Determann, who is a thoughtful observer of Saudi historiography, viewed the foreign authors, "as serving the government in its international relations, and introducing Arab nationalist narratives to dynastic historiography, in the context of the Saudi struggle with

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<sup>272</sup> Vitalis, *America's Kingdom* (2007), 151.

<sup>273</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1994), 40.

<sup>274</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 147.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.; 146-147.

<sup>276</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2014), 39.

revolutionary ideologies.”<sup>277</sup> However, to refute the Saudi state narrative, ‘the study of Saudi historiography abroad was one of the most effective tools of political dissidents and a result of the enlargement of public resentments. These historiographies question the veracity of the Saudi state, as a true Islamic state.’<sup>278</sup>

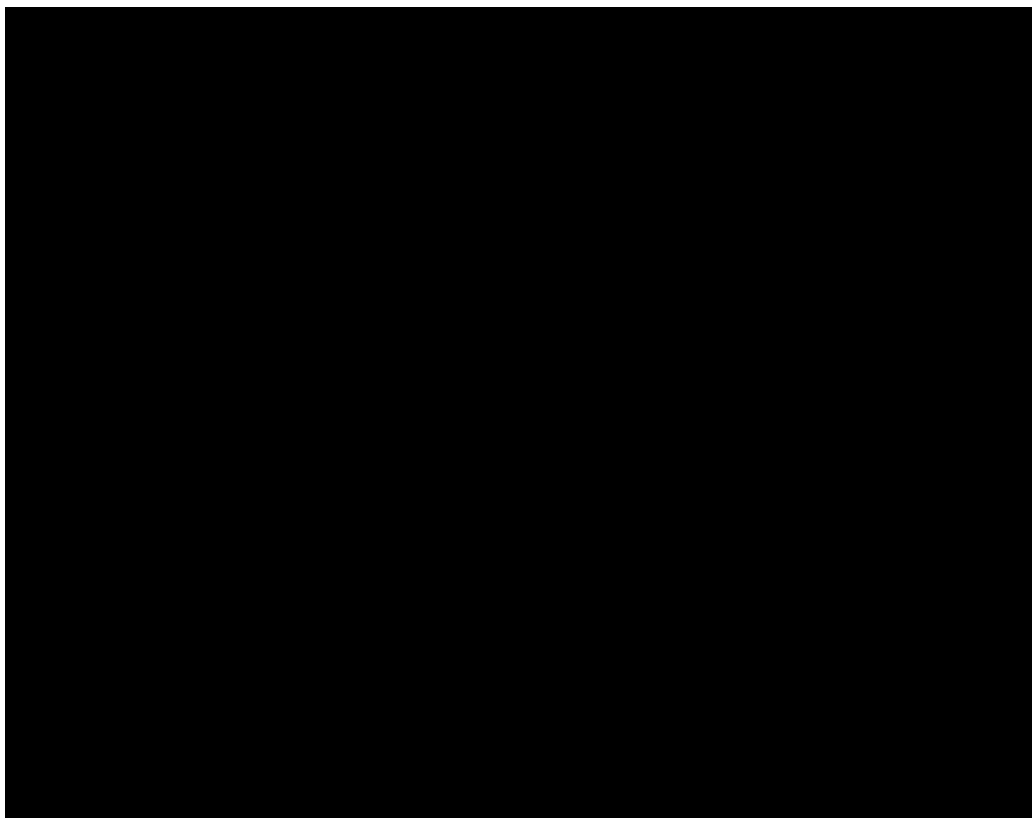
Yet, the opposition started writing (mainly abroad) numerous publications, from catalogues to historiographical studies of the Saudi royal family and dynastic history, which narrated the path of Al Saud from the eighteenth century until the twentieth with the aim of discrediting it. This, in the words of Matthias Determann, “was clearly shown in the over page of Al-Sa‘id’s book, which displayed a shocking rendering of the Saudi coat of arms, with a decapitated head instead of the palm tree on top of the two sabers.” <sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 58-61.

<sup>278</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 142-155.

<sup>279</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2014), 57-58.



“Cover of Nāṣir al-Saʿīd Tārīkh ( 1983).”<sup>280</sup>

From the reading of the aforementioned work and other dissidents’ works, the assentation here is that in Saudi Arabia at the time there was a major theme for democracy or, at least, legitimate rights appearing as natural; texts that from different Saudi angles, among them historians and anti-colonist analyses, explain the value of the demands of works in the context of freedom and rule of law through the Islamic process. Yet all these opposition fronts did not succeeded in winning credibility in Soviet eyes, as one researcher found that, “the Soviets do

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<sup>280</sup> Nāṣir Al-saʿīd, *Tārīkh āl Suʿūd*, vol. 1 (Bayrūt: Ittiḥād Shaʿb al-Jazirah al-ʿArabīyah, 1404 "1983-84"), "the Cover page of the book." I would like to thank Matthias Determann, who published this picture in his book before me: *Historiography in Saudi Arabia*, (2014), 58; but nicely directed me down to the shelf mark of the book in SOAS Library in order to read this important book. Therefore, albeit I had the picture from the origin source, I used with permission from Determann.

not expect a revolution to be started by workers who earn so much.”<sup>281</sup> Moreover, “it is unthinkable that the Kremlin would leave so important a strategic center absolutely virgin.”<sup>282</sup>

Additionally, according to As’sd Abukhalil, “ the communists have not been active in Saudi Arabia in recent years, though the Saudi communists remained active as individuals.”<sup>283</sup> Another factor which weakened most, if not all, the oppositions was “the Saudi armed forces were still in an embryonic state and were balanced by the tribal National Guard loyal to Al-Sau’d.”<sup>284</sup> As a result, since the armed forces toppled other Arab monarchs, the royal family had worried about this possibility and possessed a separate National Guard that has been a descendant of the loyal ikhwān, who did not revolt against King Abdul’ziz in the late 1920s.<sup>285</sup>

The National Guard has been built up as a counterweight to the regular armed forces and its main task was to protect the ruling family from internal dissidents.<sup>286</sup> In addition, Turki al-ḥamad put forward the idea that “the decline of all opposition was associated with the emergence of the state’s organized economic development during the second of the late 1960s and its intensification during the 1970s.”<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 140

<sup>282</sup> PRO, FC 1110/193, ‘ *Saudi Arabia: Reports on Communism*’. (1494).

<sup>283</sup> Abukhlil, *the Battle of Saudi Arabia* (2004), 165.

<sup>284</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1994), 50.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.; 51-51.

<sup>286</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 141; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 206.

<sup>287</sup> Al ḥāmd, “Political order in changing society” (1985), 127.

At this point it is appropriate to deduce that these activities of the opposition, had been managed partly by families who were not tribal or religious people, since these groups have been the fulcrum of Saudi society ever since. The failure also mirrored how the tribal warriors always plays an important part in maintaining the country's stability alongside with religion which is "still" 'the most important tool that Saudi Arabia has been evolving to its present state.'<sup>288</sup> Thus, the political process is characterized, in times of trouble, by partnership (religion and tribes) and emphasis on consensus over differences and confrontation.

This alliance or (political culture), "which the state itself cannot divorce itself from completely, the sum total of the values, norms and rules which underlie, enable and constrain political behavior in the country and hence defines what is acceptable in politics and what is objectionable."<sup>289</sup> That by itself, might explain why the opposition has remained dormant since then. It might be argued that irrespective of political opposition, this failure had created a stable society. The Soviets did not retain any ties to that opposition (apart from media support) and generally considered it as weak. Further, "Moscow would probably not attempt to become militarily involved itself or even offer direct military assistance until the insurgents actually came to power."<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "Does Saudi Arabia Face Revolution?," *The New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1979, At <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1979/jun/28/does-saudi-arabia-face-revolution>. (Accessed 22 March 2014).

<sup>289</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed and Loulouwa Al-Rasheed, "The Politics of Encapsulation: Saudi Policy towards Tribal and Religious Opposition," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 115.

<sup>290</sup> Katz, *Russia & Arabia* (1986), 155.

This might explain how Moscow's cautious and evenhanded approach toward the communist opposition and others was the result of this attempt to avoid jeopardizing its interests with regard to Saudi Arabia and the entire Gulf region.

More interesting but less understood is the ability of Saudi Arabia to completely refute any accusations of crackdown in the opposition which undoubtedly gave it additional motivation to dedicate itself to the task of fighting the communist and its affiliations beyond its borders, which appears to be a highly religious concern. Since Saudi Arabia is known as the birthplace of Islam and hence any imminent threat perceived by any kind of opposition (communist or not) will in the royal family's eyes mean against religion and ultimately the legitimacy of the state. Finally, one should hasten to point out here that religious legitimacy (Islam) is the main factor, if not the only factor, which has made Saudi Arabia survive thus far, specifically, societal acceptance of religious and moral legitimacy clearly seemed to increase when Faisal took the helm of office in 1958, whereby he opted for harmonious cooperation between ruling and religious scholars. Put simply, Faisal fused Islam in Saudi Arabia to combat the subversive ideas, and as we will see in the coming chapters, communism was foremost amongst them.

**Faisal's Struggle for security**

One of the main factors shaping the Saudi stance during the Cold War and making the country declare its antipathy towards the Soviet Union, had been the result of the internal struggles within the royal family that ended up culminating in Faisal as prime minister and later on as King.<sup>291</sup> The period since 1958, did not only witness a change in Saudi foreign policy but also had other significant implications for Riyadh- Moscow relations.

Holden and Johns interpret the struggle, as “urgent action was needed to preserve the patrimony of the family.”<sup>292</sup> Internally, once the monarchy was relieved of the pressure of an imminent revolutionist coup, Saudi Arabia cast its lot with its internal struggle of power and transition, the economy was on the verge of financial ruin and Faisal sought a quiet route to economic stability. “Faisal was compelled to act with a heavy hand in order to keep the princes within the limits his budget allowed.”<sup>293</sup> Since his emergence on the political scene in Riyadh, Faisal understood that one of the most pressing problems he faced was the “economic situation.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> The internal struggle inside the Saudi Royal family took place from 1958 to 1964, but the real authority was in Faisal's hand since 1958, as he became the prime minister. In my research, I refrain from discussing the struggle as it is not related to my work, but for more detail on that struggle between Saūd and Faisal, see for example: Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia*, (1997); Yizraeli, *Politics and Society in Saudi Arabia* (2012); Kechichian, *Faisal* (2008); Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985).

<sup>292</sup> Holden & Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 200.

<sup>293</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 123.

<sup>294</sup> Nehme, *Saudi Arabia: 1950-1980* (1994), 934.



Therefore, Faisal's programme of economic reforms throughout the 1960s 'sought to put Saudi Arabia back on track and rescue the country from bankruptcy, and to improve its international standing.'<sup>295</sup> especially the Saudi economy prior to Faisal taking the office was unable to meet the expectations of the Saudi population.

Externally, the significance of the shifts in foreign policy under Faisal; first to cast off the Soviet Union from the Middle East and second, to promote the Islamic model in Muslim countries, should not be underestimated. Thus, Faisal sought to maximize Riyadh's pragmatic role, during the Cold War, through its position as the custodian of the two holy mosques. Faisal administration's approach endorsed the legacy of authoritarianism that preceded him as it solidified his position.

However, the main form of Faisal foreign policy was his personality, which would directly affect foreign action of his state. For that, 'he took some corrective measures and steered the country into a path of neutrality for a short time, in relation to regional politics, which he saw as a wise course of action to be taken at the time.'<sup>296</sup> Here Saudi Arabia pursued a more active role in Middle Eastern affairs "as the King attempted to assist both Arab and Islamic countries. In October 1958 Saudi Arabia officially announced "neutralism and Arab Nationalism as the cornerstones of the Kingdom's foreign policy."<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 217.

<sup>296</sup> Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Arabia foreign policy." (1980), 50

<sup>297</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 180.

Saudi Arabia “adopted a policy of appeasement towards Nasser and quickly declared its support for positive neutralism.”<sup>298</sup> This friendly policy later on, as we will discuss, failed since the crisis in Yemen started and Saudi Arabia under Faisal’s leadership sent troops to Yemen and the US under Kennedy’s presidency, which also helped the progressive Arab regimes to counter pro-communist sentiment.<sup>299</sup> According to Bronson, “Faisal eventually became one of the most intensely anti- Communist warriors American leaders would find.”<sup>300</sup>

Internally, Faisal’s government inside the kingdom took steps to suppress the opposition who were arrested and charged with anti-government conspiracy and jailed,<sup>301</sup> therefore “the beginning of the reign of Saud (1953) could be considered the golden era of Saudi nationalism.”<sup>302</sup> On assuming office, as Alexei Vassiliev pointed out, “Saudi opposition abroad appealed to Faisal to launch a course of political reforms where he ignored and was utterly alien to his own policy and became a prime target for the newly formed National Liberation Front of Saudi Arabia (NLF).”<sup>303</sup> Henceforth, a firm and impenetrable wedge was set by Faisal toward all the opposition, combatted communism in Saudi Arabia and also in the entire Middle East. “Faisal construed the anti-communism approach as blocking the spread of radical ideologies.”<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1993), 39.

<sup>299</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 181.

<sup>300</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 26.

<sup>301</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 366.

<sup>302</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1993), 49.

<sup>303</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 217.

<sup>304</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia* (1993), 39.

I propose that Faisal's anxieties about communism could be attributed to the shifting leadership concern, especially in light of the Saudi overthrow of Saud, which was concurrent from 1952-1964.

Historian John Miglietta argued that, "Saudi Arabia adopted a very anti-communist, anti-radical foreign policy in the region."<sup>305</sup> Despite many attempts by Saudi Arabia to fight Communism in the Islamic orbit, the US cannot be seen as passive bystanders. It was clear that Saudi Arabia throughout the Cold War was a convenient ally of the US to fight communism, despite American continuous support to Israel, which led later to the oil embargo in 1973. Saudi Arabia, during the Cold War, was a deeply religious state that "was perfect prophylactic against the spread of Communism and hence a natural American partner."<sup>306</sup> This relationship between Washington D.C. and Riyadh at that time remained preferable as the manure for the flourishing of political symmetry "based on reducing the influence of the Soviet Union as increased in the Middle East and the Muslim World."<sup>307</sup> Even as the media in the late 1950s portrayed Faisal as an opponent of US policy, "the reality was Faisal believed that the Saudi kingdom should prefer the US over Western powers like Britain or France and most importantly an anti-Communist stance with the West."<sup>308</sup> Thus, it was indicative of that style of foreign policy, which did not negatively impact Faisal's domestic legitimacy; even though it appeared to follow rather than lead in the global stage.

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<sup>305</sup> Miglietta, *American alliance Policy* (2002), 247.

<sup>306</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 26.

<sup>307</sup> Barradah, "Saudi Arabia's Foreign policy." (1989), 270.

<sup>308</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 176; Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006); 55-60.

Practically, the Saudi regime viewed 'the importance of strengthening the relations with the U.S. as an important step towards remaining squarely in the western camp offering protection against communism and its agents in the Arab world who advocated revolutionary trends in the 1960s.'<sup>309</sup> Therefore, Saudi's strategy towards the Cold War in general and communism in particular was to form a pro-Western alliance among the Arab states based on the Saudi blueprint around the world to combat Moscow and its allies. Yet, any attempt to build the alliance within the Arab states would partly flounder due to Soviet support of Palestine. Moscow's stance with the Arabs in the conflicts with Israel were seen as an impediment to Riyadh's policy in the region given the fact that some Arab States, 'the foremost of them being Egypt, were more preoccupied with the emergence of the state of Israel than with the communist threat.'<sup>310</sup>

Although King Faisal understood the agony and pressure of the Palestinian issue and its impact on domestic politics and his legitimacy, he was not seen as being as vulnerable as Saud was. To this end, 'Faisal sought a compromise between his country's strategic security needs, which required reliance on the U.S. and the security emanating from anti-monarchist Arab Nationalism and communism.'<sup>311</sup> Indeed, the evolution of this tightrope policy of Faisal's time was tightly linked to stability to the regime with articulation of the danger of the USSR and its policy locally, regionally and globally.

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<sup>309</sup> Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (2002), 115.

<sup>310</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 170.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 179.

Faisal regime displayed markedly a pro-U.S. policy and, wrote Vassiliev “he had to distance his country from the US’s bungling in the Arab world,”<sup>312</sup> however, the material gained of the relationships motivated him to maintain it, albeit with more of a conciliatory style towards Saudi’s Arab neighbors.

The US was perceived as “the leader of the free world and was seen as the chief protector of the Arab and Muslim world against communism, and in the same vein, the US was seen as the protector of Zionism.”<sup>313</sup> This contradiction in Faisal policy, as David Long put it, “helps us to explain Faisal’s ambivalence toward the US and its attitude which has been greatly misunderstood.”<sup>314</sup> It would appear that this was in fact true until the 1967 defeat and the oil embargo.

The Arab-Israeli struggle led the Saudi regime to have a deep understanding of some assumptions of the US policy in the region. In other words, Riyadh was searching for a way that would enable the kingdom to protect its interests without bowing to the West. So it advocated nonalignment, both with regard to the great powers and to the Arab World.<sup>315</sup> Thereby, “King Faisal’s judgment was that none of the Arab states would let itself fall into the Soviet’s lap of its own volition. Only mistakes on the part of the West could push them there.”<sup>316</sup> From this case, the Saudi government in 1962, drew two major conclusions about the USSR.

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<sup>312</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 215.

<sup>313</sup> Long, “King Faisal’s World view.” (1980), 181.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997), 178.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

The first was that time was no longer on the side of those arguing for a continuation of the existing policy of containment with the Soviets: the need was for full caution with Moscow or its allies. The second was the appropriate country to oversee that policy was the U.S., as the lesser of two evils; in particular, Saudi Arabia prudently sought to avoid direct fighting with the Soviet Union lest it trigger the full-scale consequences in the long term from a powerful state and its Arab allies in the region.

Faisal himself was, according to Safran “too shrewd not to recognize the long-term dangers involved in a strategy that depended so completely on appeasing the principal potential opponent. He had subscribed to it at a time of stress when no viable alternative appeared to exist, but he was bound to modify it as soon as an opportunity presented itself.”<sup>317</sup> Indeed, unlike his predecessor, (Saud), Faisal based his policy approach in the Cold War on his reexamination of the threat of communism or nationalism to Saudi interests. Faisal tended, along with his closest advisers, to see Nasser or (Arab nationalism) as the man who introduced the Soviet Union into Arab affairs, arming some nations with tanks and airplanes, others with a communist and near communist party structure, which deflected the course of the governments and sometimes overthrows them.<sup>318</sup> Hence, to Saudi Arabia, the strength of nationalism stemmed from communism and hereby the rejection of nationalism further strengthened the notion of the Saudis to fight the Soviet Union.

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<sup>317</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 90.

<sup>318</sup> Sheean, *Faisal* (1975), 102.

As such, Saudi Arabian policy towards the threats throughout the Cold War should be seen 'partly if not mainly' as not only a way to deal with the regional threats but also 'as an important factor to actively combat and roll back the Soviet influence in the region as a catalyst to strengthen Saudi defenses so as to offer a credible deterrent.'<sup>319</sup> It was yet another example of the links between internal and external politics, which were traditionally practiced in an effort to deal with the threats. Saudi Arabia turned to external enemies as a means to quell popular discontent. This placed the question into the internal domestic situation and legitimacy, which was identified earlier. Safran interprets these features of Faisal's policy as the result "in seeing the kingdom safely through a sea of potential defense and security problems was that he did so by relying on a variety of means other than conventional military power."<sup>320</sup>

Here then was a new element in foreign policy; Islamic diplomacy or solidarity by Faisal represented a new approach in Riyadh, confirmed with fanfare by emphasizing the importance of Islam as a key actor in the Middle East. What that policy added, as we will now see was an extra set of reasons for Saudis to combine Islam with foreign policy in its attempts to become a force for fighting communism in the world. As such, in the speeches and rhetoric emanating from Riyadh, religious considerations appeared to be among the main factors against communism and nationalist movements and hence reasons to execute that policy.

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<sup>319</sup> Miglietta, *American Alliance policy* (2002), 246.

<sup>320</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 212.

The feasibility of this and the influence of Islam have been much debated however it is not possible to disregard it as a contributing factor not just to the identity of the Saudi State but also arguably to its people and therefore a factor that might affect foreign policy.

### Conclusions

Sāud's period represented "the endpoint of the Saudi defensive posture"<sup>321</sup> regarding political threats from Communism which 'were discernable in Faisal's time and dominated his rule.'<sup>322</sup> Thus, since the beginning of the 1960s, Faisal underwent a systematic and consistent foreign policy for Saudi Arabia. After the turmoil in this region he foresaw Saudi interests and involvement to promote anti-Soviet trends and block anti-Western trends. Importantly, the removal of Saud from the premiership 'made it possible for Faisal to restore a measure of balance to the kingdom's foreign policy and to reorient it according to Faisal's view.'<sup>323</sup>

Another point worth stressing is that Faisal was acutely aware of the Soviet Union as a revisionist state, a stance in tune with regimes in the Arab world that professed to be revolutionary and therefore he strove to obtain American

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<sup>321</sup> One of the most salient features of Saudi foreign policy in the twentieth century has been a defensive posture in face the foreign invasions by militarily superior forces. See Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986), 183.

<sup>322</sup> CIA, FOIA. Document Number: 0005622828, "We Consider That in General The Estimates Concerning Saudi Arabia Contained in Since 20-2-58 Are Still Valid." August 11, 1958. At <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/0005622828>. (Accessed 19 June 2014).

<sup>323</sup> Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia* (1997).



support against Moscow before launching his own view of Islamic policy on the realms of his enemies. For Saudi Arabia, the rise of nationalist movements in the Middle East was an outgrowth of Soviet policy, against which Saudi Arabia encouraged political mobilization. Accordingly, it may be worthwhile considering how this fear in this regard shaped Saudi Arabia regional policy landscape more dramatically. The next chapter will demonstrate how regional foreign policy challenged Saudi Arabian views during the Cold War, especially regarding the elimination of the Communist leverage throughout the Middle East.

## Chapter 4

### - Pan-Arabism Tilting Towards Communism in the Arab World

Throughout the Cold War, Egyptian involvement with Moscow was profoundly troubling to Riyadh. As would be expected, the regional policy of the USSR combined with the leadership of Jamal 'abd Nassir brought the Cold War to the Middle East. The Arab states' view of Saudi Arabia was increasingly at odds with its policy to extend its political and social position in the Cold War. However, if anything, the Saudi state became more paranoid about Communism when Egypt with its allies launched a process of aligning with the Soviets from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. The struggle in the Arab World was intense and played out within the context of the global Cold War. Considering the Arab World one of the most important arenas of the Cold War, I will investigate to what extent Saudi's policy in the Arab World was executed in the context of global Cold War. This chapter in the first place focuses on the Cold War dynamic inside the Arab World during Faisal's regime. In the following account, the chapter seeks to address: To what extent did Arab nationalism suffer from association with Communism?

Additionally, analysis of Saudi efforts in the Arabian Peninsula will focus on its activities to eliminate Communism. Mutual political suspicion between Arab nationalism and communism of the Saudi regime led Riyadh to tackling the agenda of those ideologies inimical to the Kingdom's security. Hence it illustrates the main features of this new approach, which enables us to obtain a systematic assessment of the stated aim of this chapter.

**Political Interest Convergence of Pan- Arabism and Communism**

Generally speaking, Soviet policies toward the Middle East since 1955 were 'either a response to opportunities rising with no Soviet involvement or in pursuit of a highly valued objective.'<sup>324</sup> The Arab World's attitude toward Communism was highly positive compared with the West and the U.S. from which skepticism continued to feed. The major outside theater, apart from the Gulf, was relatively dominated by the USSR. One of the key observations regarding this issue put forward by Stephen Walt, is that "the principal ideological link between the Soviet Union and its Middle East allies has been mutual opposition to imperialism."<sup>325</sup> As discussed further in this chapter, this approach had been the recurrent theme for understanding between Pan-Arabism and the Soviet Union.

In August 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency circulated a new assessment of Arab nationalism in the Cold War. The report outlined a review of the movement of the socio-political impact on Arab politics in the Cold War in greater detail. It mentioned that, "Arab nationalism is a movement of long standing with a great appeal aimed at resistance of the Arab people against "colonialism", whereby Nasser proclaimed the goal of eliminating Western imperialist influence. As a result, the radical nationalists sought and received Soviet Block support in their conflicts with the Western powers and with the pro-West Arab regimes."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Al Mosaed, *"The USSR and the Gulf States Relations."* (1990), 77.

<sup>325</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 193.

<sup>326</sup> CIA, FOIA . Document Number: 0001491625, *"Arab Nationalism As a Factor in The Middle East Situation"*, August 12, 1958. At

Moscow has long established ties with Egypt, the militant Arab States such as Syria, Libya, Iraq, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, as well as the PLO.<sup>327</sup> On the surface, Saudi Arabia aspired to contrast this influence in the Arab World, even if it was in a relatively limited role. The year 1958 was something of a watershed for the Soviet Union in the Middle East "where the Middle Eastern situation once again began to change."<sup>328</sup>

With the growth of Arab nationalism in the late 1950s, "a new generation of Arab nationalists became increasingly impatient with the 'neo-colonial' presence in the region."<sup>329</sup> The emphasis on fighting the postcolonial order meant that Communism itself remained increasingly powerful and continued to be dominated by Arabs. As Rogan contended, "The young generation questioned the legitimacy of Arab monarchies showing more enthusiasm for revolutionary republicans,"<sup>330</sup> and simply 'looked at the conservative governments of the Gulf as artificial creations of outsiders.'<sup>331</sup> Beyond that, "Nasser and his message of Arab nationalism were capturing the imagination of Saudi Arabian citizens."<sup>332</sup>

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<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/0001491625>. (Accessed 1 September 2015).

<sup>327</sup> S. H. Amin, *Political and Strategic Issues in the Persian-Arabian Gulf* (Glasgow: Royston, 1984), 32.

<sup>328</sup> Stephen Page, *The USSR and Arabia: The Development of Soviet Policies and Attitudes towards the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula, 1955-1970* (London: Central Asian Research Centre in association with Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1971), 47.

<sup>329</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* (1988), 68.

<sup>330</sup> Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*, 2nd ed (London: Penguin, 2012), 227.

<sup>331</sup> CIA, FOIA, "Arab Nationalism As a Factor in The Middle East Situation", 1958.

<sup>332</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 75.

Unsurprisingly, this Arab ideology, as Kelidar argued, “believes in the need to remove the last vestiges of foreign domination in the Arab World”<sup>333</sup> and particularly in the Arab Gulf states proving influential. Indeed, Kelidar portrayed that pan-Arabism in the Gulf ‘represented a potential threat to the Arab state’s domestic and international basis of existence in the Gulf, and so an Arab leader who wielded the pan-Arab card could be dangerous indeed.’<sup>334</sup> While there remained a strong pull of Arab nationalism and socialism, the Arabs since the Second World War perceived that the danger of colonial powers (notably the U.S.) was a particular threat to their territorial and social coherence. “Ironically, Moscow’s policies in the Arab World were somewhat less aggressive than Washington imagined.”<sup>335</sup>

From this perspective, Moscow’s image in the Arab World was not so damaged, and hence the Soviet Union had emerged by the early 1960s as a preferable power for revolutionary Arab regimes and entered into fierce competition with the United States for strategic political spheres of influence in the Middle East.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Abbad Kelidar, “The Struggle for Arab Unity,” *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 23, no. 7 (July 1967): 293.

<sup>334</sup> Michael Barnett, “Identity and Alliances in the Middle East,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 405.

<sup>335</sup> Douglas Little, “The Cold War in the Middle East: Suez Crisis to Camp David Accords,” in *The Cambridge History of The Cold War*, ed. Melvyn Leffler and Westad Odd, vol. II Crises and Detente (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 310.

<sup>336</sup> Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: Nation and State in the Arab World* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2000), 141; Charles Bancroft McLane, *Soviet-Middle East Relations* (London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1973), 9.

With the prospect of expanding Soviet influence growing even more significantly after the Suez crisis, the agreement to sell arms to Egypt, along with friction between Egypt, and the Western powers over the high Aswan Dam and the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956, the Soviets had cheered the Arab World.<sup>337</sup> Essentially, "Moscow was skillful in identifying itself with the Arab states in their aspirations to create a Palestinian state, all that in an effort to undermine the Western and the American position in the Middle East."<sup>338</sup>

To this end, the new approach of Moscow in the Middle East in the 1960s was "a product of Soviet attitudes towards the contemporary international scene in general."<sup>339</sup> As such, these numerous events enabled the Soviets to obtain a strong foothold in the Arab World and thereby "Moscow sees the developing countries in the Middle East as participants in what remains primarily as a struggle between East and West."<sup>340</sup> In this case, the Soviet Union had adopted different tactics toward their traditional opponents. In this phase, however, the lesson that Saudi Arabia and the allies of the US drew from the USSR was that Arab republics (Moscow's allies), were as much a hindrance as Moscow itself. It was undeniable that the nature of Moscow's policy had created some difficulties between Arab states themselves; clearly not what Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Arab World wanted.

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<sup>337</sup> Mosaed, "The USSR and the Gulf States Relations," (1990),80; Giritli, *Superpowers in the Middle East* (1972), 56; Page, *The USSR and Arabia* (1971), 34.

<sup>338</sup> Barradah, "Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy: 1945-83," (1989), 272.

<sup>339</sup> Aaron S. Klieman, *Soviet Russia and the Middle East*, Studies in International Affairs / Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research, no. 14 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 41.

<sup>340</sup> Giritli, *Superpowers in the Middle East* (1972), 56.

Further, “the Arab nationalists’ assessments of Marxism as a major world ideology led to a wide-ranging dialogue at theoretical and practical levels.”<sup>341</sup> Perhaps Arab nationalism encompassed the fact that within the Middle East a few nationalist states would also have to restructure their internal economics on the Socialist Model, which fitted happily with the Communist-predictions for foreign policy.<sup>342</sup>

Accordingly, ‘the Soviet Union took advantage of opportunities presented by anti-imperialism and western missteps in the Middle East’<sup>343</sup> and ‘exploited those that expanded its political and military presence in the Middle East.’<sup>344</sup> These sentiments of “strongly anti-western dominance were important in fostering nationalists agitation in Saudi Arabia as a whole and served pan-Arabism in Saudi Arabia.”<sup>345</sup> In many cases and according to Vassiliev, “Moscow backed the Arabs against the West and, with reservations, against Israel; Saudi Arabia had to come to symbolize settlement colonialism and the West outpost in the region in Arab eyes, Soviet influence and prestige were high.”<sup>346</sup> In this vein, these certain circumstances in the Cold War, which had led to the development of Arab nationalists, locally and regionally, had made Saudi Arabia position itself in a peculiar place in the Arab World.

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<sup>341</sup> Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism* (2000) 141.

<sup>342</sup> Hashim S. H. Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917-1966* (London: KPI, 1986), 113.

<sup>343</sup> Al Mosaed, “*The USSR and the Gulf States Relations.*” (1990), 124.

<sup>344</sup> Mark Heller, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in the Middle East: Between Old Thinking and New* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1991), 25.

<sup>345</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* (1988), 65–66.

<sup>346</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 209.

Additionally, one must keep in mind that 'the religious factor with which Saudi Arabia fought against Communism did not exist in Arab nationalism, as religious factors seemed less important.'<sup>347</sup> Besides, most of the theorists who presented formal theories on Arab nationalism 'were not Muslims who reacted strongly to any idea of Pan-Islamism and incentives.'<sup>348</sup> In other words, "Arab nationalism did not in any way oppose or negate any religion, but it accepted all religion in order to draw from their sources the cups of purity and liberation, of strength and immortality." <sup>349</sup>

On balance, the new concept of revolutionary nationalism advocated by Egypt was viewed as a dangerous competitor to the Saudi ideal of exclusive loyalty to Islam.<sup>350</sup> From then on, Arab nationalism became less of a useful strategy to be utilized by the Saudi regime in the Cold War to fight Communism. In other words, "Saudi Arabia did not recognize the mystical links emanating from Arab nationalism. If unity was to be the goal, it should be based on Islam, rather than Arabism." <sup>351</sup> Thus, relying on religious and conservative elements of Saudi society that resulted in a wariness and hostility towards Arab nationalism started to be less prevalent in Saudi foreign policy.

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<sup>347</sup> Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Foreign Policy Behavior 1964-1975." (1980), 183.

<sup>348</sup> Al-Osaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 96.

<sup>349</sup> Zuraïq Qustantin, "Arab Nationalism and Religion," in *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, ed. Sylvia Kedourie and Sylvia G Haim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 168.

<sup>350</sup> Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Foreign Policy Behavior 1964-1975." (1980), 186.

<sup>351</sup> Ghazi Algosibi, "The 1962 Revolution in Yemen and Its Impact on the Foreign Policy of the US and Saudi Arabia" (PhD diss., University of London, 1970), 272.



From this vantage point, anti-Arab nationalism in Saudi policy during the Cold War was characterized by an anti-communist stance inside Riyadh, which used more policies of denying Arab nationalism to get its message across, often perceived at the very least as having communist potential.

As I mentioned earlier, the stakes had grown and sympathy towards Moscow's stance in the Arab World since the end of the 1950s started exulting categorically. This sympathy was a critical variable in the evolution of Communism in the Arab World. The Saudi Scholar ṣulṭān Sālm, in the midst of the Cold War explained the dominant tendency of Arab nationalism in the Middle East in his book about Faisal's thoughts. He argued, "Arab nationalists developed a distinct identity based on ethnicity not Islam, which emphasized a relationship with the states based on worldly interests. Consequently, this trend sparked an interest in Moscow to advance its interests with Arab nationalism and framed a predominant role in Arab soils."<sup>352</sup>

As such, the British embassy quoted Saudi political figure saying; "Marxism had isolated the Arabs from international support, at a time when the enemy (the USSR) has been gaining ground in the international arena. Militant socialism has embroiled in internal strife and sown us hatred for Muslims. All the hopes attached by Arab leftists to the military might and diplomatic resourcefulness of the Soviet Union proved of no avail."<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> ṣulṭān Sālm, *al-Faiṣal Malik fī fīkkr ūmmah*, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Turāth, 1976), 155.

<sup>353</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808, (BS 12/1), 'Further criticism of Arab Oil Policy in Saudi Arabian press and Broadcasting Service', 17 July 1967.

In various texts, debates of nationalism and communism took precedence over Saudis, in ways that served Saudi's vision of fighting both. Saudi King, Faisal, was very aware that "communism viewed Arab nationalism positively to a significant degree in its message to be united to anti-colonialism to state-led development and other shared values."<sup>354</sup> Yet it is clear that such ideals of interests between pan-Arabism and communism being discussed and even expressed to a public audience, inside Saudi Arabia and outside, resulted in increasing concern of Riyadh's stance of persuasive anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism.<sup>355</sup>

Even if "Communism was in fact a profoundly uneasy agglomeration of forces during the Cold War, there were deep divergences and suspicions and sometimes conflicts between various Arab regimes and the Soviet Union."<sup>356</sup> The Communists in Arab states were repeatedly attacked<sup>357</sup> and also in this period, "the negative attitude toward Communism and its followers was internationalist and atheistic in character."<sup>358</sup> Soviet rapprochement with Arab revolutionary regimes could not be ascribed to their pro-Communist policies. The Arab revolutionaries were generally hostile and distrustful towards Communism.

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<sup>354</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 18-19

<sup>355</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 151.

<sup>356</sup> George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East*, Foreign Affairs Study 2 (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 55-57.

<sup>357</sup> Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism* (2000), 193.

<sup>358</sup> Walter Laqueur, "Soviets Dilemmas in the Middle East and Second thoughts on the Third World", in *The U.S.S.R and The Middle East*, ed Michael Confino, Shimon Shamir (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1974), 101. Hisham Sharabi also argued "the ideology of Arab socialism seemed to have more Proudhon than Marx, to British socialism than to Communism". See: Hisham Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World: The Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1966), 68.

Yet, "Rapprochement was due rather to the combination of their anti-colonial ethos, their neutralism, and their preferences for a state-directed economy under the banner of Arab socialism."<sup>359</sup> In a nutshell, as Stephen Walt stated clearly "the historical record shown that an acceptance of Marxist ideas and a tolerant attitude towards local communists are not prerequisites for alignment with the Soviet Union."<sup>360</sup> At least in reference to local communism in the Middle East during the Cold War, "there is no doubt that the Kremlin leaders sacrificed ideology on the altar of their state's interests."<sup>361</sup>

Nevertheless, Moscow seemingly insisted upon having an understanding of local culture and expectations for its position as a key feature of Soviet involvement in the Arab World. McLaurin reiterated this point 'that the Soviet Union pursued a strategy of building a degree of dependency into its relations with the Arab World thereby enabling her to be aware of local needs and expectations.'<sup>362</sup> Additionally, the support of Arab revolutionary regimes indicated a general framework within Moscow that underpinned its broad offensive in the political, economic, and cultural sectors. The objective may be viewed as an attempt to displace spheres of influence of western presence, and consequently to export dependence models of the Soviet Union among the recipients of Soviet aid.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East* (1972), 59.

<sup>360</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 187.

<sup>361</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 159.

<sup>362</sup> R. D. McLaurin, *The Middle East in Soviet Policy* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1975), 75.

<sup>363</sup> Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East* (1972), 58–59.

Therefore, a change in the political status of Arabs was an essential goal for the Soviet Union in the establishment of its friendships. To this end, “three principal trends emerged in contemporary Arab nationalism. These three key milestones Neutralism anti-Zionism, radicalism,”<sup>364</sup> were the causes for a friendly attitude towards Moscow in the Arab World. In general terms, the convergence of interests was a feature of the Moscow approach to the Arab World. Flowing from these interests were a sense of cooperation, a theme that was repeatedly stressed throughout the Cold War.

The Soviet leaders completed the reorientation of their policy towards the underdeveloped countries. This new Soviet unity on the basis of anti-western influence, “would aim to promote not internal revolution but the weakening of Western influence and control in the Middle East and its eventual expulsion from its positions of strength there. It would work through, not against the existing regimes.”<sup>365</sup> Moscow needed the Arab revolutionary states not only to export revolutionary ideas, but also to expand its allies’ influence in the area. Within these years, the combination of creating the UAR and the nationalization of the Suez Canal empowered Egypt in performing the rules of leadership in the Arab World. Pan-Arabism emanating from Cairo seemed about to sweep away all other political tendencies in the Arab countries.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>365</sup> Page, *The USSR and Arabia: The Development of Soviet Policies and Attitudes towards the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula 1955-1970* (Central Asian Research Studies: London, 1971), 25.

<sup>366</sup> Arnold Hottinger, *The Arabs: Their History, Culture and place in the Modern World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 270; Gerges, *The Superpowers and The Middle East* (1994), 56.

Indeed, “the formation of the UAR was seen as the finest achievement of the movement of radical nationalism and socialism.”<sup>367</sup> Not surprisingly then, ‘nationalism had not only sensitized the Middle Eastern politicians to foreign influence in domestic affairs but also pre-empted the field of mass organizations.’<sup>368</sup> Although “the Saudi government opposed the revolutionary and socialist form of pan Arabism, Arab migrants as well as Saudis who had studied brought the pan-Arabist ideology to the kingdom.”<sup>369</sup> Hudson rightly portrayed then pan Arabism impact on Saudi Arabia as “something of a problem for Saudi Arabia’s ideological legitimacy during the Cold War.”<sup>370</sup>

Those fears seemingly came from the way Riyadh viewed pan- Arabism as an attempt to extend spheres of influence among Arabs and Saudis, to undermine if not replace pan-Islamism and its role internally and regionally. All these would lead to mobilize or proselytize Saudis to a revolutionary stance, which could bring an end to the Saudi conservative regime.<sup>371</sup> Needless to say, the activities of Arab nationalists inside the kingdom were subordinated by the government, as discussed before, “but adopted ideology of the ‘unity of purpose’ that became dedicated to the overthrowing of all Arab regimes whose rulers and systems of

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<sup>367</sup> Kelidar, “*The Struggle for Arab Unity*.” (1967), 294.

<sup>368</sup> Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (1963), 184.

<sup>369</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2014), 53.

<sup>370</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 177.

<sup>371</sup> Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula* (1983), 35.

government stood in the way of Arab unity and progress. Saudi Arabia was, however, the primary target of these activities.”<sup>372</sup>

Despite opposition to Arab nationalism in Saudi Arabia, however, Saudi nationalists emerging in the 1950s and 1960s provided fertile ground for Arab nationalism in the Arab World under Nasser’s leadership.<sup>373</sup> Not only did many Saudis experience the development of Nationalism and anti-western sentiment, but also an increasing sense of being part of the Arab World. Having the same identity, they recognized that nationalism was “the spontaneous awakening of the pressing social, political and economic needs for the Arabs.”<sup>374</sup> Saudi Arabia became one of the key arenas of pan-Arabist influence externally and the interior of hospitality existed there. Having crushed all kinds of oppositions, as I mentioned in the second chapter, Arab nationalism still proved influential from its depth in society.

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<sup>372</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Oil, Power and Politics: Conflict in Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), 35–36.

<sup>373</sup> I limit my intention of examining Arab nationalism in Saudi Arabia to the extent that indicates the influence or whitewash of USSR policy in the Middle East in their demands. Yet, I mentioned in the second chapter the various political oppositions and “mainly the Communist opposition” to the Saudi regime throughout the Cold War.

<sup>374</sup> Richard Nolte, “From Nomad Society to New Nation: Saudi Arabia,” in *Expectant Peoples: Nationalism and Development*, ed. K.H. Silvert (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 91; Bernard Haykal, “Oil in Saudi Arabian Culture and Politics: From Tribal Poets to Al-Qaeda’s Ideologues,” in *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, ed. Bernard Haykal, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 131.

Indeed, 'the social transformation'<sup>375</sup> of Saudi society in the beginning of the 1960s, along with the popularity of Nasser, constituted an imminent threat to the Saudi regime because of the widespread support of Saudis to 'Abd al-Nasir and his union. In assessing the Pan-Arabism threat, a large many Saudis embraced the ethos of Arab Nationalism, which made matters worse not better and shaped the relations between Saudi Arabia and Egypt latterly. It underscored the popular support for Arab nationalism and revolution in the Arab World, in particular towards Egypt, which significantly affected the behavior of the Saudis and their leadership during the Cold War.

The impetus of Arab radicalism in the 1950s and 1960s was to loosen the grip that Islam held over ordinary Muslims and daily lives, 'which meant a direct attack on the religious cornerstone of the Saudi power.'<sup>376</sup> These events sent a powerful signal that the kingdom was seriously vulnerable. Thus, Saudi Arabia sought to dispute the idea of Arab nationalism and undermine its potential message. Subsequently, as I mentioned in the second chapter, the government started draconian measures of dismissal and imprisonment of anyone (leftists and nationalists) in Saudi Arabia, "even if nationalism in Saudi Arabia remained comparatively moderate."<sup>377</sup> Yet, the government saw the events inside and outside as a common effort, if not a conspiracy theory, orchestrated by Arab nationalism that was backed by leftist communists to undermine and overthrow the Saudi Royal family.

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<sup>375</sup> Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (2002), 110.

<sup>376</sup> Lacey, *The Kingdom* (1982), 375.

<sup>377</sup> Nolte, "From Nomad Society to New Nation: Saudi Arabia." (1962), 93.

As such, the strong emphasis on fighting Communism in the Cold War, which was a general feature of Saudi policy, also made the acceptance of any Pan-Arabism plan unlikely.



‘Saudi Arabia understanding of Arab nationalism waves.’

Sullivan presented a continuance of Saudi premonition in the Arab World where he stated, “Feeling itself threatened by the pincers of Arab radicalism emanating from Cairo and moving eastwards through the Fertile Crescent and southwards through the Red Sea en route to their decisive meeting in the oil rich Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia emerged in the 1960's as the leader of the conservative Arab



states in the context of the Arab state system and became a major psychological factor in Saudi Arabia foreign policy.”<sup>378</sup>

Thus, Sullivan also contextualized the Arab states within the global order and argued that “Saudi Arabia was allying itself closely with the United States to offset the close Egyptian and radical Arab ties to the Soviet Union and, to a lesser but growing extent, to China.”<sup>379</sup> On that basis, it appears to indicate that during the Cold War the Arab World was a microscope area of the global Cold War and hence Saudi’s role had been restricted and dictated by the U.S. Thereby it found itself increasingly under tremendous pressure from Arab nationalists and anti-westerns sentiments accusing the Saudis of being the bastion of the colonial powers.

Moreover, the link between Arab nationalism and Communism was a crucial factor in Saudi’s reference to crises faced by the Arab World. In this vein, the combination of nationalist pan-Arabism and antipathy to the West was to become the special line for the Soviets to have a hand in the Arab World since the Suez Crisis.<sup>380</sup> There was some basis for a polarization between Arab nationalism and Saudi kingship as “Faisal was able to blunt Nasserist designs in the peninsula and yet win support from the more liberal elements in the Kingdom for his comparatively enlightened policies.”<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Sullivan, “*Saudi Arabia in International Politics*.” (1970): 437–438.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>380</sup> Hottinger, *The Arabs* (1963), 271.

<sup>381</sup> Hudson, *Arab Politics* (1977), 177.

Yet, 'the most that can be said is that nationalism in Saudi Arabia was made mainly abroad and propagated by foreign newspapers, journals and radio broadcasts mainly from Cairo.'<sup>382</sup> However, by the 1960s more and more Saudi students living abroad or returning from abroad joined the UAR in activities either abroad or at home. That was, more and more educated Saudis engaged in Egypt's message for Arab unity, which threatened the Saudi government's survival.<sup>383</sup>

The ideas of Nasser's pan-Arabism and social values served as a new type of power that appealed to and was supported by Arabs. Accordingly, these liberal and socialist values directly influenced and directed Pan-Arab individuals in Saudi Arabia within the framework of the Cold War and Arab nationalism. Saudis believed the best route for their country in the Cold War was to shy away from American control through Aramco.

The most striking aspect was that, according to Bernard Haykel, "an Arab nationalist movement emerged in the 1950s in Saudi Arabia and held oppositionist views about the rule of the monarchy."<sup>384</sup> In particular, the prominent 'Abd Aallāh Al-ṭurayqī's (the first ever Saudi minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources), was typical Arab nationalist opposition of the regime who embraced nationalism in a radical way.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Nolte, "From Nomad Society to New Nation: Saudi Arabia," (1962), 92.

<sup>383</sup> PRO , FCO 8/1170 (BS1/11), 'Arrests connected with plot to kill King Faisal,' 1 Jan, 1969.

<sup>384</sup> Haykal, "Oil in Saudi Arabian Culture and Politics." (2015). 131

<sup>385</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Sarah Yizraeli and Dr. Makio Yamada for providing me with different views of al-ṭurayqī's political stance. They kindly pointed out

Al-ṭurayqī's was "an ardent supporter of Nasser and wanted the Saudi government of Faisal to be in tandem with him against the West."<sup>386</sup> In his book *America's Kingdom*, Robert Vitalis, mentioned that the discord Al-ṭurayqī "caused in Saudi Arabia reinforced animosity against him to become, Hated and some portrayed him as angling to play the role of Nasser inside the kingdom if the House of Saud was ever to be overthrown."<sup>387</sup>

To encapsulate the dimensions of his Arab nationalist orientations, he thus 'adopted more political activism from the outset of his career and especially within the Aramco community.'<sup>388</sup> He had shown the usefulness of studying abroad for understanding the contours of Nationalism. Al-ṭurayqī's was preoccupied with the prevalence of Arab nationalism, and central control of the government and anti-royalists of Saudi Arabia. He built on the idea of the Nationalist cooperation of the Arab population.

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to me that he famously, as an Arab nationalist leftist, denounced that Saudi Arabia and its vast oil resources were under American control (a sort of imperialism) and he was asking about having a good relationship with the USSR or even China. For this purpose, it is so important to understand that his main idea was to find common ground between the Arabs and the Soviets and thereby step away from the West. In this way, his political views were commensurate with Arab nationalism and hence I find it quite useful to shed some light on him briefly in my thesis.

<sup>386</sup> Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 244.

<sup>387</sup> Vitalis, *America's Kingdom* (2007), 208.

<sup>388</sup> A few scholars have conducted studies on Al-ṭurayqī. See for example: Vitalis, *America's Kingdom* (2007); Haykal, "Oil in Saudi Arabian Culture and Politics, (2015); Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012); Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans* (1974); Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999); and most read recent book, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sayf, *Abd Allāh Al-Ṭurayqī, ṣukhūr Al-Niḥ Wa-Rimāl Al-Siyāsah* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes books, 2007) which is of special interest to anyone studying the rise of Arab nationalism in Saudi Arabia, with a special emphasis on al-Ṭurayqī's role .

Stephen Duguid wrote that, "Through his public statements on petroleum and related matters, one can judge his attitudes towards such issues as the process of modernization, Arab nationalism, and the Western presence in the Middle East, in his case represented by the international oil companies."<sup>389</sup> "He made no secret of his pro-Nasser sentiments, and nationalization of ARAMCO and won more and more supporters."<sup>390</sup> Al-ṭurayqī's notion of Saudi oil that has been unfairly exploited by Western powers not by Arabs was of grave concern. The State Department reported Al-ṭurayqī said of oil that, "Arabs should treat oil as a strategic substance, just as Americans treat Uranium."<sup>391</sup>

His defense of nationalism contained anti-Islamic threads, which was totally against Saudi policy in the 1960s. 'He contended that Saudi Arabia should shift from promoting Islamic foreign policy and instead embrace Arab nationalism.'<sup>392</sup> This involved a certain strategy in which "Al-ṭurayqī's and his fellow new men in Saudi Arabia seemed to had been trying to develop a genuine sense of Saudi nationalism to complement their more general feelings of Arab nationalism."<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Stephen Duguid, "A Biographical Approach to the Study of Social Change in the Middle East: Abdullah Tariki as a New Man," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 3 (1970): 196.

<sup>390</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012); 224–227; Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans* (1974), 54–56.

<sup>391</sup> Wikileaks, US Embassy Kuwait. 1977. "Former Saudi Oil Minister Tariki Pontificates on U.S and Arab Oil." Wikileaks Cable: 1977KUWAIT02646\_c. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1977KUWAIT02646\\_c.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1977KUWAIT02646_c.html). (Accessed 12 October 2016).

<sup>392</sup> al-Sayf, *Abd Allāh Al-Ṭurayqī* (2007), 188; Haykal, "Oil in Saudi Arabian Culture and Politics: From Tribal Poets to Al-Qaeda's Ideologues," (2015) 132–133.

<sup>393</sup> Duguid, "A Biographical Approach to the Study of Social Change in the Middle East." (1970), 202.

This view put him at odds with the government and the pan-Arab position in society met with strict concern from Faisal's regime. Yet, "Al-ṭurayqī and his activism led to his ostracism by the Saudi government, even if his views had been adopted by Saudi Arabia from the 1970s onwards."<sup>394</sup> Indeed, Al-ṭurayqī's case exemplified the convergence of interests of Arab nationalists and Moscow, which directly or indirectly affected Saudi Arabia by the context of the Cold War.

Yet, to reiterate and from a political standpoint, it would be a mistake to assume that the sudden growth of pan-Arabism was partly attributed to the Soviet influence in the Middle East. Indeed and as will be discussed of the next section, the charismatic Egyptian leader Nasser created a regional environment more conducive to bringing the Soviets to his side which 'by no means necessarily would lead to a complete take-over by the Soviet Union.'<sup>395</sup> Yodfat, in his study on Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror in 1973, found that, "The Soviet Union was not interested in the slogan of Arab unity and it substituted the slogan of unity with Arab progressive and revolutionary forces which were held together by anti-imperialism."<sup>396</sup> Therefore, penetration of communism in the Arab World could be examined in the context of broader social, political and sentimental changes towards imperialist domination, not in isolation of them.

One may also imagine the political development in the Arab World in the 1960s towards Moscow, which was perceived by Saudi Arabia as a real danger of

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid.,132–133.

<sup>395</sup> Hottinger, *The Arabs* (1963), 299.

<sup>396</sup> Aryeh Yodfat, *Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1973), 261.

Communism becoming entrenched in Arab society. Hence, Hottinger's statement that "the real danger threatening a modern Arab state in its relations with the Soviet Union is an amoral one"<sup>397</sup> is therefore correct on Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the values, which make up Saudi Arabia's ideological legitimacy, are: Islam, and "Arabism anti- revolutionary", communist stance.

To this end and more precisely, the linkage between pan-Arabism and Saudi legitimacy can be adaptable, but the ideological revolution, which symbolized the tolerance or acceptance of communist ideas, in the Arab World, accelerated the hatred campaign by Saudi Arabia towards pan-Arabism. On a regional level and within the context of the intensified inter-Arab struggle for leadership and prestige, "Arab unity and nationalism from the conservative camp's standpoint was not only unfeasible under the banner of revolutionary Arab radicalism but was considered totally implausible under the alleged "Soviet Russia's aegis."<sup>398</sup> Having discussed how and why Pan-Arabism adopted its role regionally in a way that affected the Faisal regime's anxiety, the next subheading will describe the role of 'abd Nasser in this equation.

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Hafiz, "Changes in Saudi Foreign Policy Behavior 1964-1975." (1980), 99.

**Nasser as “the linchpin” of Communism in the Arab World**

In the last three decades of the twentieth century the idea of an ‘Arab Cold War’ has taken hold in the social sciences, referring to the two powerful sides in the Arab World of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in their own political strife. Arguably this could have been a more precise explanation if we looked at the regional powers’ interests coinciding with global power. In broad terms, the global Cold War penetrated the Middle East, the United States gradually became the dominant Western power in the region and thus targeted the expansionist aims of the USSR in the region. Traditionally, this rivalry of the main superpowers continued to plague the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the next decade.

By this process, Saudi Arabia and Egypt came to constitute the main two players of “the Arab Cold War in the Middle East”<sup>399</sup> and consequently “a regional cleavage with its own logic and specificity was subsumed into the great Cold War divide.”<sup>400</sup> The distinguishing feature of much of the Cold War in the Middle East was thus concentrated on the core level of the ideology in Saudi Arabia and Egypt foreign policy. Therefore, “The great changes that emerged from the Egyptian revolutionary atmosphere and, primarily, the Yemenite civil war and the infiltration of nationalist elements into the Persian Gulf, made Saudi Arabia adopt an aggressive stance towards Egypt and its leader.”<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> This taxonomy is borrowed from Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasir and His Rivals 1958-1970*, 3rd ed (Oxford: Oxford University, 1971), 1.

<sup>400</sup> Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis* (2009), 18.

<sup>401</sup> Mann, “King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser’s Revolutionary Ideology,” (2012), 762.

Taken together these different elements constituted the core reasons for the conflict, which function as a point of departure for action. To counter communism's appeal, one of Saudi's first efforts in the Middle East was to contain Nasser's credentials and his promotion of Arab nationalism. Saudi Arabia denounced Nasser for debasing the religion, claiming that he operated in accordance with Moscow's norms and values.<sup>402</sup> In this way, Saudi Arabia nonetheless aroused a wild Communist scare over the Middle East and Moscow tried to construct "an Arab -Nasser front", who sought to galvanise the world against Western allies in the region.<sup>403</sup>

A distinction between Communism and Nasser in particular is worthy of further discussion here in order to add clarity to analysis. Although Nasser's critics from Saudi Arabian leaflets and speeches categorised him as a puppet of Moscow, there has been a long-standing debate over whether it would be better classified 'neutral' or even did not intend to follow an inevitable pro-Soviet line. The CIA also offered some insight into Nasser's relationship with Communism, writing that, "we do not believe that Nasser is Communist or sympathetic to the Communist doctrine. He opposed Arab Communists because they are a challenge to his own authority."

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<sup>402</sup> Vitalis, *America's Kingdom* (2006), 230.

<sup>403</sup> Nejla M. Abu Izzeddin. *Nasser of the Arabs: An Arab Assessment* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Pub, 1981), 227. In this book, one has to deal with it more cautiously since the author had measured the actions of Nasser with reference to the only Arab leader who could lead Arabs to serve their nation. The notion of picturing Nasser as the true Arab leader and combining this with the notion of lamentation of the lost of the UAR was clearly in this book.



He regards the Soviet Union as a great power with interests and policies in the Middle East which happen at this stage to coincide with his own.”<sup>404</sup> In addition, ‘During the period of the UAR Moscow saw the Arab nationalist movements “Ba’ath-Nasser” as ideological rivals of Marxism and Khrushchev lectured and hectored Nasser and his colleagues accordingly.’<sup>405</sup> Interestingly enough, “Nasser himself, in a series of speeches at great public gatherings lashed vehemently at the Communists as agents of a foreign power and alerted the people that a new phase in the external power had begun.”<sup>406</sup>

Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal’s seminal works on Nasser were among the first to advance the subject of Nasser and Communism further. Haykal recognised the interests between Nasser and Moscow and wrote: ‘Nasser used to move in a series of different circles, some of them touching, others making contact at certain points and others almost overlapping. Nasser looked to Moscow as, the lesser of two evils, whose power would not mind Egypt’s growing influence’<sup>407</sup> Accordingly, Nasser could not be classified as a Communist; he looked to the USSR just for support which also increased his distrust of the West. But, ‘the longstanding opposition between radical nationalists of Nasser and the Western-backed Conservatives dovetailed nicely with the USSR to secure steadily expanding influence in the area by backing the radical regimes.’<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> CIA, “Arab Nationalism as a Factor in The Middle East Situation”, 1958.

<sup>405</sup> Peter Woodward, *Nasser* (London: Longman, 1992), 89.

<sup>406</sup> Abu Izzeddin. *Nasser of the Arabs* (1981), 226-227.

<sup>407</sup> Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal. *Nasser: the Cairo Documents* (London: New English Library, 1972), 273.

<sup>408</sup> CIA, “Arab Nationalism as a Factor in The Middle East Situation”, 1958.

The period between 1960 and 1967 was the challenge of Saudi Arabia and Egypt through the sphere of influence in the Middle East, as a logical and predictable outcome of the global Cold War. Tensions between Saudis and Egypt were inevitable and reached their height in the wake of the collapse of the UAR and consequently the events in Yemen.<sup>409</sup> A major feature of this phase: "the struggle for supremacy in the Arab world between Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Saudi Arabia's King Faisal lay in their different objectives for the role of the Arabs within the world of Islam."<sup>410</sup>

On the one hand, "the breakup of the UAR revealed deep fissures within the Arab societies and the heterogeneity and factionalism of the revolutionary camp."<sup>411</sup> Besides, weakened by these developments, 'the Egyptian leader's legitimacy struck on the international stage constituted a central motive for a regional vengeance and sought help publically from Moscow.'<sup>412</sup> On the other hand, these events provided Saudi Arabia an opportunity to play religious motives as an important role in the construction of the state policy aims and rationales for collective action regionally. Yet, one further factor that was an essential component of Saudi Arabian strategy on this stage was the attempt to legitimize their action and roles in line with the US.

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<sup>409</sup> Mohammed Al-Jazairi, "Saudi Arabia: A Diplomatic History, 1924-1964" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1970), 98.

<sup>410</sup> Simon, "Small States as Major Power." (1980), 199.

<sup>411</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 133.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.; 145 ; Fāṭmah al-freihī, *'alāqāt Al-Su'ūdīah Al-Maṣryah Fi 'ad al-malik fāiṣl Bin 'abd al-'azīz 1964-1975: Dirāsāt Fi Al-'lāqāt Al-Syāsīah* (Al-Riyādh: 2012, Dārah al'malik "abd al-"aziz), 35.

This meant discovering common ground between the Arabs and the West based on fathoming and 'combating the communist and socialist influence that spread across the Persian Gulf in the 1950s and 1960s.'<sup>413</sup> Above all, the concept that Saudi Arabia was emphasizing in the Cold War was that Egypt was trying to advance Moscow's agenda in the Arab World, requiring concrete steps regionally and globally to eliminate this devil alliance.

In a British document at the national archive, it was acknowledged early on by Faisal that Nasser was Moscow's agent in the region. As one British diplomat in Riyadh put it, "Faisal has always told us that Communism stalks behind Nasser; yet although he will openly admit it, he must realize that it is not just a question of Nasser and Communism, but of the steady pressure from outside of 'revolutionary socialism' on a politically backward Saudi Arabia, which is bound to its effect in the long run."<sup>414</sup> Not surprisingly, tensions between Cairo and Riyadh frequently erupted, and the pledged "Solidarity, understanding and cooperation" had vanished and been replaced by dissension, distrust and rivalry."<sup>415</sup>

Egypt, after the dissolution of the UAR and the dream of the unity illusive, believed the Arab World's problems stemmed from U.S. clients in which all of these states, principally Saudi Arabia, were responsible for stealing the Arab

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<sup>413</sup> Mann, "King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser's Revolutionary Ideology," 749. ; Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia*, (1997), 180.

<sup>414</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808 (BS12/11), 'Saudi Arabia during and after the Arab-Israeli War,' 8 August 1967.

<sup>415</sup> PRO, FO 371/163006 (BS 1011/1), 'Annual Review of Saudi Arabia 1961', 6 March, 1962.

dream. Yet, when the UAR collapsed, “the Egyptian media viciously attacked the Saudi regime. It alleged that the regime in Riyadh had funded the ‘plot’ against Arab unity and had encouraged Saudis to rise up against their reactionary rulers. Henceforth, “Nasser has more radical policies towards Saudis that caused an escalation in Egypt’s anti- Saudi rhetoric and subversive activities.”<sup>416</sup>

Interestingly, “Egypt’s new political orientation was enshrined in the 1962 National Charter, which sought to weave Islam, Arab Nationalism, and socialism into a coherent political project.”<sup>417</sup> Additionally, as observed by Galia Golan, “Nasser regime from 1962 was a significant factor, which combined with Moscow’s interest, heightened the Soviets’ view of Egypt as the cornerstone of their policy in the region.”<sup>418</sup> In each of these cases conservative, “Western-oriented regimes, like Saudi Arabia, succumbed to some form of Arab radicalism. In each instance, when the dust settled the influence of the Soviet Union seemed to have advanced a bit further into the Arab World.”<sup>419</sup> Thus, “Nasser began to articulate a justification of re-claiming the dream of a pan- Arab union and therefore dark clouds filled the Arab political horizon.”<sup>420</sup> This demand ‘developed and re-emerged in a form that the quest for Arab unity required the prior overthrow of Arab monarchies and conservative regimes.’<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* (1988), 88.

<sup>417</sup> Rogan, *the Arabs* (2012), 403.

<sup>418</sup> Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 57.

<sup>419</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1908s* (1981), 19.

<sup>420</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 145.

<sup>421</sup> Sindi, “King Faisal and Pan- Islamism.” (1980), 185.

The leading historian of Oxford University Eugene Rogan has concluded, “Starting in 1962, Nasser took the Egyptian revolution down to Soviet- inspired socialism.”<sup>422</sup> He also argued that “the ultimate target of Nasser’s critique after the break up of the UAR was the “reactionary” men of property who put narrow national self-interest before the interest of the Arab nation.”<sup>423</sup> Behind Egyptian pique was the fact that the Iraqi revolution of 1958 polarized the region further and “Saudi Arabia replaced Iraq as one of the two major antagonists in the bipolar state system. Ideology once again came to parallel the dominant political conflict.”<sup>424</sup>

Thus, it was in this bitter challenge that Saudi Arabia was in a defensive position and alarmed at the prospect of Egyptian regional hegemony and its repercussions on its relationships with Moscow. Saudi Arabia had to strengthen its relationship with the United States.<sup>425</sup> He later, according to Gerges, “was forced to cooperate one hundred percent with the U.S. officials to stem the tide of Communism in the Arab World.”<sup>426</sup> This alliance was confined largely to issues of foreign policy “mainly anti-Communist strategy” and limited in other respects.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Rogan, *the Arabs* (2012), 401-402.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Sullivan, “Saudi Arabia in International Politics.” (1970), 437.

<sup>425</sup> James Piscatori, “Islamic Values and National Interest: The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia,” in *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. Adeed Dawisha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 41.

<sup>426</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 154.

<sup>427</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 197–198.

There was some debate in Saudi Arabia about the United States' attitude towards Nasser and his danger. This apprehension was manifested in a meeting between Faisal and Kennedy in 1962 when Faisal warned the U.S. of Nasser and his leftist propensities, which put him with the Soviet Union. In this message Faisal formally informed the US, "Nasser is a Communist who presents a real danger to the Arab World. He is either a Communist, a rabid madman, or schizophrenic."<sup>428</sup> This statement reflected the tension inherent in Faisal towards the Kennedy administration, which entered office with a strong emphasis on supporting modernizing states, and left little room for conservative states such as Saudi Arabia. This was best described as "an endeavor from the Saudi king to influence 'the shifting sands policy' of the US on emphasizing modernizing and democracy in the Middle East."<sup>429</sup> Perhaps that was indirectly to criticize the United States, to relieve its demands of reform agendas and shift priorities towards restraining Nasser, which gave breathing space to the special relationships between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. in the Cold War.

A change in the policy priority orientation of the U.S. in the Middle East was merely an essential goal for the Saudis. The key was opposition to Communism, American interests, coinciding with Saudi Arabia whereby "they share the same aversion to revolutionary change in general and Soviet Communism in particular."<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> John F. Kennedy Library, NSF, Box 156 A, Countries Series, Saudi Arabia , 2/1/62-2/19/62 (Folder 2 ), To Rusk from Talbot, 13 February 1962.

<sup>429</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006),78.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 199.

These political benefits for Saudi's alliance with the U.S occurring through the Cold War provided them with the vantage point of fighting Communism more assertively. This point was supported by As'ad Abukhalia, who emphasized "the Saudi era in the Cold War was characterized by a strong push for a supreme U.S role as 'an honest broker', something that would not have been possible without Saudi intervention with Arab governments, many of which at the time were aligned with the Soviet Union."<sup>431</sup>

While alliance with the U.S can be considered an advantage to some extent by increasing Saudi leverage in the Arab world, it could also be considered that the green light from the U.S to Saudi Arabia was given in order to combat Communism at any cost. This can be observed within their relationships, which, at the time, had a more direct interest in the region and the power to exert influence in the event of struggle against communism. In part, the Americans were not completely blind to King Faisal's brutal internal suppression and adopting Islam beyond its realm. But in order to secure its political position in the region from the threat of Communism, "the lesser of two evils" and thus the Islamic ideology was needed. This in turn, will enable us to understand how Saudi Arabian policy in the Cold War and henceforth, was approached from the "the colonial dynamic", illustrating the important role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East since then, as a center of power and interest by the U.S. Yet, in the course of the Cold War, the Islamic ideology that Faisal unleashed did not challenge the U.S directly, but served as a strategic prize for the West against communism.

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<sup>431</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 102.

Yet to Saudi Arabia, developing this relationship with the U.S. and insistence on the narrow Islam of Saudi Arabia to limit the potency of Pan-Arabism appeared to capture his philosophy in the Cold War, which made Riyadh such a powerful power that could stand up to Nasser and Moscow. While the U.S. would undoubtedly support King Faisal against Communism, Faisal's initial plan was to destroy the threat from inside by starting with Egypt, which represented the rooted, historical and moral frustration of Muslim aspirational unity. With this in mind, Saudi's mistaken perception in the Cold War was that the U.S. was ready to defend the Kingdom from its neighbors unconditionally.<sup>432</sup> This was indeed indicative of a tectonic change in Saudi's strategy to Egypt's stance in the Arab World. Due to an altering political landscape and shifting popular sentiments, Saudi's policy of appeasement of Nasser came to an end. In Mordechai's words, "Faisal abandoned his traditional appeasement policy with Egypt and started conducting a more aggressive foreign policy towards Egypt."<sup>433</sup> The latter point mirrors that which was raised in Bin Hethlain's study.<sup>434</sup>

However, what is remarkable was that the Arab Cold War therefore seemed in its way to end up being much more a hot war and this became apparent within a short time and can be attributed to two factors. First, the political compliance and impulse inside the kingdom became increasingly peddled to secure local support of the notion that Arab states simply cannot be turned into states of a communist-style revolutionary.

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<sup>432</sup> Jeffrey R. Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97–98.

<sup>433</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era (1988)*, 88–89.

<sup>434</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 37.



As Sālm intoned, 'Saudi's Islamic leadership is capable of deterring nationalism under Communism protection which could reconstruct the Muslim nations away from the source of evil.'<sup>435</sup> Second, and perhaps more than anything else, as Mejcher postulated "fighting Nasserism in Saudi's eyes was communism, which had to be fought as America combated Soviet infiltrations."<sup>436</sup> Accordingly, communism and Pan-Arabism overlapped and intertwined at the time, which forced the Saudi regime to engineer the country's threat as a means to justify the pursuit of such a tactical policy. This policy focused firstly on eradicating 'Communism' in the Arab World and also 'pan-Arabism backers. Then advocating more openly and willfully for the principles of Islam in the morally corrupt political systems administered by Arab nationalist revolutionary states.<sup>437</sup> This powerful signal meant that the quiet, reconciliatory, and non-confrontational strategies of Saudi Arabia of the 1950s were abandoned, and Saudis adopted a more confrontational and hostile strategy.<sup>438</sup> Subsequently, "the year 1962 was characterized by an environment of rigid political polarization between Egypt and the conservative camp led by Saudi Arabia."<sup>439</sup>

In the Arab World this weaving and knitting "of manipulation of one's image and the image of one's rivals is therefore represented as the most important source of power in the minds of other Arab elites," as Stephen Walt correctly

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<sup>435</sup> Sālm, *al-Faiṣal malik fī fikkr ūmmah* (1976), 154.

<sup>436</sup> Helmut Mejcher, "King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud in the Arena of World Politics: A Glimpse from Washington, 1950 to 1971," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (May 1, 2004): 13.

<sup>437</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 220.

<sup>438</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 76.

<sup>439</sup> A. I. Dawisha, "Intervention in the Yemen: An Analysis of Egyptian Perceptions and Policies," *Middle East Journal* 29, no. 1 (1975): 48.

suggested.<sup>440</sup> That was not to be neglected here. It was the time whereby Faisal categorized Nasser as a global puppet of Moscow, who found common ground with the USSR, to destroy Muslims and their religion from the bottom-up.<sup>441</sup> In the meantime, Saudi's antagonistic attitude towards Nasser presented an excellent opportunity to forge an Islamic awareness that aimed to put an end to the Egyptian influence in the area, which ultimately could discredit Moscow.

From the beginning of the decade the King Faisal's conviction that "Nasser was merely being used by atheist Communism for its own purpose, and Communism is of course a destructive creed which the devout Muslims must rigorously oppose"<sup>442</sup> became clear. Crucial to this analysis, the two themes produced from Saudi's behavior were: firstly, claiming Nasser's moves and response in the mid 1960s was an attempt to improve the new Soviet-Egyptian relations and therefore to discourage Saudi Arabia from getting directly involved in helping its Arab sisters. Secondly, trying to shift the support for Islamic solidarity at the expense of Pan-Arabism, and those who were opposed to this idea did not matter.<sup>443</sup> Within this particular rationale, the Saudi state had embraced the ideas of Islam as the indispensable ideology in which the domestic affairs of the state both at home and in the region are intertwined with encouragement of political dynamic antagonism against Communism. This put forward the first stones of religious lines of the Saudi state's path that was dominated by

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<sup>440</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), 149.

<sup>441</sup> Tāj al-Sārhan, *Al-Syāsah Al-Khārjīyah Al-Sa'ūdīyah Fi 'ad Al-Malik Fāiṣl Bin Abd Alaziz*. (Al-khrṭom: al- Dār al-'rbiayah, 2000), 30–31.

<sup>442</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808 (BS12/2), 'Arab Oil Embargo', 8 August 1967.

<sup>443</sup> Ivanov Alexander, "'āḷ'ālqāṭ ālsāudiāh Alrussiāh Fi al-naṣf al-ūol min Al-qarn al-'ashreen," *Al-ḥaras Al-Waṭanī*, 84. "Maliaff khāṣṣ "an al-mu"tamar al-'ālamī li-tārīkh al-malik "abd al-"azīz" (December 1999): 85–87.

inclination towards hegemony in the Middle East and imposing control over Muslim and Arab ideology that served the interests of the state itself.

During this period, Saudi critics of Nasser left nothing for the imagination in regard to Nasser and the conflict, which concerning the allocation of blame where they portrayed him as a 'sinner, communist project, Arab communist, oppressor, saboteur, the enemy of Muslims.'<sup>444</sup> This language has increasingly become harsher and categorically denounced Nasser policy by using inflammatory quotes and anti-Arab nationalism themes. Besides, "the Saudi government employed non-Saudi men persecuted by the Egyptian state to counter Nasser's rhetoric."<sup>445</sup> Similarly, Egyptian and local nationalists, teachers and journalists were dismissed and rejected renewal of entry visas.<sup>446</sup> The Ministry of Information was established in 1962 "in order to monitor the press and help fight against the Egyptian propaganda."<sup>447</sup> Also, according to Vassiliev in the time of clashes between Faisal and Nasser, "the Western Media began actively supporting Saudi Arabia in order to play the anti-Soviet Card."<sup>448</sup> Faisal's regime moved to quash public discussion, "which can be read as a move to both control Arab nationalism and also contend of the media inside Saudi communities."<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Jamīl Al-ḥujilān, *Al-Dawlah Wa Al- Thurāh*, (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-su'ūdīah lil-al-Nashr, 1967), 55. ; 'Umar ḥleeq, *Ḥadīth Fi Al-Syāsah Al-Khārjīah Al-Sa'ūdīyah* (Al-Riyādh: al- Dār al-sa'ūdīah, 1967), 20–25.

<sup>445</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 55.

<sup>446</sup> PRO, FC 8/356, (BA 3/9 Part A) 'Saudi Arabia', 29 September 1967.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. , Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (1993), 43.

<sup>448</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 248.

<sup>449</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 150.

Indeed, religious and cultural hostility to Egypt reinforced Saudi antipathy to Nasser on political and strategic levels. Thus, Faisal provided a primary proponent of pan-Islamism policy aimed at the strongly anti-Nasser crusade in the Muslim World.<sup>450</sup> In all this, Saudi policy culturally interacted with the national interests of religious nationalism instead of Arab nationalism. Here, Faisal remarked in this regard:

“We have been described as ‘mercenaries, barbarians and cowards’ because of disagreements with the ruler Egypt.... Egyptian press launched a strong campaign against us and poured insults upon us? ... We must accordingly investigate the best way to take us back to the right track and the glory. There is a clear message: we have to believe in God, in Islam as our religion that could eliminate the malicious and dangerous trends in the Arab Countries.”<sup>451</sup>

This change in the political status would not reinforce the adverse relationship between Riyadh and Egypt, but might also force the local actors seeking clear support from their superpower allies acting upon their grievances. “This external influence affected the local actors’ rivalry and for the next five years it was one of the dominant features of Arab politics in the Cold War.”<sup>452</sup> The Arab systems henceforth ‘fell further under the superpowers’ influence, becoming more dependent on them for political, economic, and military support,’ as Gerges stressed.<sup>453</sup> This view is also shared by McLaurin, who described ‘the

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<sup>450</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 22–24.

<sup>451</sup> Gerald De Gaury, *Faisal* (1966), 165–166.

<sup>452</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 150.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

involvement of superpowers from 1962 to 1967 as being real in the region in order to minimize each other's threats to their client states.<sup>454</sup> As such, "the involvement and rivalry of the superpowers in the Arab World underscored that the regional players exploited the international balance of power to promote their internal needs."<sup>455</sup>

Yet, Barnett's reference to the external security of the Arab states during the Cold War is also instrumental as an explanation for local power policies. Barnett asserted, "Alliance of the superpowers in the Middle East might decrease internal security. Gulf States in particular were highly sensitive to an explicit alliance with the US and feared that might trigger domestic instability."<sup>456</sup> Accordingly, it is not the role of the superpower per se that dictated the tactics of small power: rather a multi-choice rationale of motivation prescribes appropriate and feasible action. It can be argued that the combination of "self-interest of the state" to some extent, by increasing the state's alliances globally and obtaining more powerful legitimacy internally were the backbone of Saudi Arabia foreign policy to resist challenges from radical, secular Arabs republics. At the same time, Faisal sought to increase his role inside Saudi society. In more abstract terms, if the support from the US was Faisal's high priority, the second in terms of importance was the public mobilization of Saudis. This added another political aim, which was the Saudi audiences that helped him in propaganda benefits. To strengthen this approach, increasingly Faisal wanted to arouse and appeal to the Saudis' sense of patriotism against the alien Egyptians.

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<sup>454</sup> McLaurin, *The Middle East in Soviet Policy* (1975), 23.

<sup>455</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 154.

<sup>456</sup> Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East." (1996), 426.

As such, “He declared a national emergency and proclaimed a general mobilization of the working forces of the country. Faisal assumed (for a Saudi chief) the novel role of a political leader, addressing mass rallies and using populist and even democratic-nationalist rhetoric.”<sup>457</sup> Here it showed the importance of the ideo-political make-up of Faisal’s regime that had an importance of contention of the anti-communist and pan-Arabism struggle. Never before had the kingdom’s rulers felt publically accountable to the people and communities over whom they ruled, ‘at least not those who held on to a position of power or influence.’<sup>458</sup> In broad terms, and if this analysis is correct, it can therefore be said that prior to the conflict in Yemen (the next section will look into this), Saudi Arabia decided to exploit it to the maximum in its protracted rivalry with Egypt as an appealing frontline organ of the regime, externally and internally, as a mouthpiece of his opinions about the Soviet-Egyptians’ intentions in the Arabian peninsula. Needless to say, this strategy of political mobilization was designed to strengthen its ties internationally and enhance the ethos in the sight of its subject of fighting Communism.<sup>459</sup> Overall and realistically, the national objectives of Saudi Arabia were: to have mass political support to consolidate its policies against Nasser in the region and then eliminate his influence and ideas in the Arab World. As such, linking between Nasser and Moscow was an important corollary of Saudi regime to put Saudi Arabia in a position to exert influence and thus enhance on strategic grounds what the regime believed to be the collude of Moscow-Egyptian rapprochement that resulted in a radicalizing force in Arab politics.

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<sup>457</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 99.

<sup>458</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 62.

<sup>459</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 76.

**The wheels are turning in Yemen's civil war zone**

To put a certain crisis such as that of Yemen's war and the regional involvement into the political and historical context of the Cold War, it is important to fathom the value judgment by Ferris that "Soviet policy toward Yemen must be seen in the context of a larger pattern of Moscow's behavior in the Middle East, in which relations with Egypt were central."<sup>460</sup> As such, when the war in Yemen is discussed in relation to Soviet policy in the Arab World, "it reflects the volatile mixture of revolutionary fervor and strategic calculation that made up Soviet foreign policy under Khrushchev."<sup>461</sup> The civil war in Yemen and the subsequent events of dragging regional powers were an indication of confrontation and anarchy, where the concept of balance of power has become more prominent. Hence, the developments in Yemen extended outside the local context, 'because of the Soviet support for Egypt and American and British support for Saudi Arabia, the conflict acquired an international dimension within the Cold War.'<sup>462</sup>

The September 26, 1962 coup that deposed Imam Muhammad al-Badr in Sana was also an historical turning point for Saudi-Yemeni relations. The Yemen Arab Republic became the first non-monarchical regime on the Arabian Peninsula. Its call for Egyptian support brought to Saudi borders the military forces of the most

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<sup>460</sup> Jesse Ferris, "Soviet Support for Egypt's Intervention in Yemen, 1962-1963," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 4 (2008): 8.

<sup>461</sup> Ferris, "Egypt, the Cold War, and the Civil War in Yemen." (2008), 114.

<sup>462</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000);372. ; Stephen Page, *The Soviet Union and the Yemens: Influence on Asymmetrical Relationships* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 4-6.

powerful Arab state.<sup>463</sup> Supporters of the Yemeni royal family challenged the coup, with support from the neighboring kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Egypt threw its full weight behind the new republic and its military rulers as part of what Nasser saw as the large battle between progressives and reactionaries in the Arab World.<sup>464</sup> Since Nasser drew an explicit linkage between the war in Yemen and the dissolution of the UAR, Ferris pointed out that “the war in Yemen destroyed Nasser’s neutral foreign policy by pushing Egypt onto a path of confrontation with the United States and dependence on the Soviet Union.”<sup>465</sup>

At that point, as the Cold War developed, the strategic rational thought of Moscow and Cairo became that “Yemen was a potential revolutionary dagger in the heart of the conservative Anglo-American order in the Middle East.”<sup>466</sup> Consequently, the threat posed by the Yemeni war of being the stepping-stone of nationalist- communist activities, drove Saudi Arabia much more recklessly to mobilize efforts and effective support in protecting itself and requesting international appeals.

Interestingly enough, the war in Yemen marked the first attempt of Saudi Arabia since its official establishment to engage in a war indirectly (via proxy war) outside its borders. This was the product of regional power influence and desire; which included two main factors. In the first place, the traditional values of Saudi Arabian foreign policy, “in terms of geopolitics codified” that Yemen has been

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<sup>463</sup> Gause, “Saudi-Yemini Relations.” (1982), 136.

<sup>464</sup> Rogan, *The Arabs* (2012), 417.

<sup>465</sup> Ferris, “Soviet Support for Egypt’s Intervention in Yemen.” (2008): 7.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



and will be in Saudi's backyard and the extension of any regional powers and or influence to the Arabian Peninsula should be compatible with Riyadh's demands.

Be that as it may, the relentless endeavor of Saudis to maintain control of Yemen was driven by the conventional wisdom created by the founder of Saudi Arabia "ibn-Saud" that any political instability or intervention in Yemen from regional or global contenders was perceived as a danger to the Kingdom and thereby we should check the ambitions of various enemies who expand their power in Yemen. Secondly, in Faisal's mind, his stance with Yemeni royalists is best understood, according to Gause's findings: "Riyadh works to prevent outside powers from establishing bases of influence in the Yemenis, from which such powers could affect events not only in the Yemenis but also throughout the Peninsula."<sup>467</sup>

As Ferris put forward rightly, "Yemen's remote location imparted considerable strategic significance. Situated along the shores of the Red Sea sandwiched between the oil giant and U.S. ally Saudi Arabia to the north and the British Empire's last outpost in the Middle East, Aden, to the south, the new Republic of Yemen, supported by the full weight of Nasser's political commitment and Soviet military might, was a potential revolutionary dagger in the heart of the conservative Anglo-American order in the Middle East."<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Gause, "Saudi-Yemini Relations." (1982), 4.

<sup>468</sup> Ferris, "Soviet Support for Egypt's Intervention in Yemen 1962-1963." (2008), 27.

As a result of these considerations, the civil war in Yemen was highly gratifying both to the Soviet Union and to Egypt's President Nasser. To this end, Moscow seemed to look at Yemen from a regional lens where all other governments were hostile to the Soviet Union and friendly to the West. Therefore, 'any success in Yemen could extend its influence or encourage "anti-feudalist" forces, which could be to the advantage of Moscow.'<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, any victory for Nasser in Yemen might greatly enhance the fortunes of pro-Nasser nationalist groups in the federation of South Arabia and the Gulf States.<sup>470</sup> All along the civil war in Yemen was seen as a potential destabilizing factor in the Arabian Peninsula, and the involvement of Egypt with blessing from Moscow agitated such fears inside Saudi Arabia at the time.

While these external developments were taking place, Saudi Arabia evolved a three-point strategy to deal with the Egyptian-Yemeni threats. First, 'the king decided to avoid direct Saudi military intervention at all costs and, instead, to fight the Egyptians and Yemeni republicans by proxies.'<sup>471</sup> Second, "he decided to drop all pretense of nonalignment and incur the liability of seeking the help of the United States and Britain. Third, it was a plan of Saudi Arabia to reinforce the home front that was interesting for what it excluded as much for what it included."<sup>472</sup> These political objectives had been evident in the regional dispute about the situation in Yemen, thereby conceivably diminishing Egyptian dominance in the region.

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<sup>469</sup> PRO, FO 371/162959, (File 1015), '*Internal political situation, including revolution*' 16 June 1962.

<sup>470</sup> Page, *The USSR and Arabia* (1971), 73.

<sup>471</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 95.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

Saudis habitually thought the overthrow of the imamate in Yemen and Egyptian support to revolutionary Marxism meant a worrying prospect for Saudi Arabia. 'Not just an encroachment on the Kingdom's regional influence, but it would give Nasser an edge in his drive to dominate the Arab Order.'<sup>473</sup> "The Saudi direct confrontation of military intervention in Yemen carried out in the name of countering Communist influence in the Arab world."<sup>474</sup>

Necessarily, in this phase, Saudi Arabia was faced with a threefold threat as a result of the Yemeni Coup. Firstly, Saudi regime was presented with a persistent security threat that could again encourage dissidents in Saudi Arabia to follow the Yemeni example. Secondly, 'there were signs that the events in Yemen were causing problems in the armed forces, and several Saudi pilots defected from their planes and cargoes to the Egyptians side.'<sup>475</sup> Thirdly, "there was the possibility of an Egyptian initiated invasion of Saudi Arabia with help from Moscow."<sup>476</sup>

Within the first week of the Yemeni crisis, the Saudi king Faisal was in the US and it was in this climate that Faisal looked to the U.S. for help to "eliminate this threat to their security from the Yemeni crisis and urged the West in particular

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<sup>473</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, (1994), 151.

<sup>474</sup> Nate Christensen, "Foreign Military Intervention in Yemen: The 1960s Civil War and Post-2001 US 'War on Terror,'" *Papers Presented in "HAW Conference Panel,"* April 16, 2013, 1.

<sup>475</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 49–50.

<sup>476</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 94.

the U.S. to take a firm stance against Nasser's intervention in Yemen."<sup>477</sup> Yet, Kennedy's reticence in assisting the Saudis at the beginning of the crisis was based upon a broad policy of trying to 'work with Nasser's Arab Socialism to stem the appeal of Communism.'<sup>478</sup> More dramatically, Kennedy's team strongly pushed for domestic reforms in Saudi Arabia, thus it could lead the kingdom to "a little stability and life expectancy so that our oil assets wouldn't be endangered by violent revolution or Egyptian inspired coup, etc."<sup>479</sup> For that reason, it was feared by Saudis and a few American officials that the Kennedy administration was looking to the crisis in Yemen in an approach that showed a pro-Egypt tilt in favor of political and economic reforms.<sup>480</sup>

Notably, the U.S. maintained its position that 'it would recognize the new regime in Yemen provided that the UAR and Nasser promised not to menace Aden or Saudi Arabia.'<sup>481</sup> Ambassador Komer recalled that president Kennedy made a strong pitch to Faisal, "Don't rock the boat on Yemen. Your regime is not all that strong. Do you want to release all this ferment?"<sup>482</sup> The reverberations of events in Yemen shook the political foundations of the Saudi regime and as Gause, the

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<sup>477</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Kennedy Administration and the Egyptian-Saudi Conflict in Yemen: Co-Opting Arab Nationalism," *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 2 (1995): 294.

<sup>478</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, (1985), 97. In this respect, Gerges alluded to the fact that 'Saudis were not dissuaded by the lukewarm stand of the U.S at the outset of the War in Yemen, since Britain was ready to assist them against the radical forces challenging their security.' See: Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, (1994), 160.

<sup>479</sup> JFKL, Oral History Collection, Robert W. Komer Oral History Interview. Interviewed by Elizabeth Farmer, 16 July 1964, (13-14). At <http://archive2.jfklibrary.org/JFKOH/Komer,%20Robert%20W/JFKOH-ROWK-02/JFKOH-ROWK-02-TR.pdf>. (Accessed 15 April 2016).

<sup>480</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 87.

<sup>481</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 51.

<sup>482</sup> JFKL, Robert W. Komer Oral History Interview (1964), 14.

leading observer of Saudi policy noted: "The Saudis could only have been disheartened by an American policy based upon the assumption of Egyptian goodwill."<sup>483</sup>

Thus, as Mejcher suggested, "Washington, it seems, suspected that King Faisal might also be inclined to make use of the Communist threat in order to combat republicanism."<sup>484</sup> Therefore, the assumption of American ability to stand with Saudi Arabia, or "the American complexity"<sup>485</sup> was Faisal's mission in this period under which he needed to verify, also to probe the sensitive notion that Saudi Arabia is the victim and the next target of Egyptian atrocities in Yemen.<sup>486</sup> In memo refers to the civil war in Yemen, "Faisal made it clear that even U.S. recognition of the Yemeni republicans would not mean that Saudi Arabia stopped helping the royalists. Saudi Arabia's concern is that, unless the situation in Yemen is reversed, fertile ground for the entrenchment and spread of Communism and its attendant subversive activities will be provided in the area."<sup>487</sup>

In the meantime, the Kennedy administration's political concept during the war in Yemen tried to apply the "non-aligned approach"<sup>488</sup> that threw Saudi Arabia

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<sup>483</sup> Gause, "Saudi-Yemini Relations." (1982), 144.

<sup>484</sup> Mejcher, "King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud in the Arena of World Politics," (2004), 19.

<sup>485</sup> Al-ḥujilān, Al-Dawlah Wa Al- Thurāh (1967),33.

<sup>486</sup> JFKL, Robert W. Komer Oral History Interview (1964), 14 -16.

<sup>487</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 443, Komer Papers, Saudi Arabia, Faisal Visit 10/4/62-10/8/62 (Folder 1 of 3), Memorandum of Conversation Between Talbot and Dr. Fir'awn, 3 October 1962.

<sup>488</sup> Gerges, "The Kennedy Administration and the Egyptian-Saudi Conflict in Yemen," (1995), 296.

into an unenviable position in the Arab World, complicating Saudi's stance against Communism and still further complicating the task of blocking Arab revolutionary winds in the Arabian Peninsula. After all, the dominant factor in Faisal's consideration was the realization that the U.S. was the only global actor that would allow Saudi Arabia to fight Nasser and Moscow's ambitions and without it, the mission was impossible.<sup>489</sup> Therefore, one could say that Faisal resided under some sort of 'securing American support', albeit he had been suspicious of the Kennedy administration's position. The Kennedy foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia raises some pertinent points regarding the involvement of the U.S. in the Yemeni crisis. In July 1963, it assessed that "Unless we send the fighters promptly, Saudis may again accuse us of breaking promises."<sup>490</sup>

At this time it was a coincidence, the British themselves were closer to the Saudi perspective in Yemen than the Americans and Faisal was now gravitating more to agreement with the British than with the Americans, but as Komer remembered, "the U.S. wanted to prevent Faisal from feeling he could play the British off against us."<sup>491</sup> Republicans in Yemeni relations with the British were

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<sup>489</sup> In this period, the Kennedy administration somehow patronized its policy towards Saudi Arabia; that had another barrier between Saudi Arabia and the US which eventually led Faisal to reform on pressure from the U.S. See for example: Long, *The United States and Saudi Arabia*, (1985), 114. ; John Stothoff Badeau, *The American Approach to the Arab World*, 1st ed., Policy Books of the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper & Row, 1968), 145–147.

<sup>490</sup> JKFL, NSF, Countries Series, Saudi Arabia, 7/63-8/63, Memo from Komer to Kennedy, 2 July 1963.

<sup>491</sup> JKFL, Robert W. Komer Oral History Interview (1964), 22.

not good because of friction along the Federation border and because of Britain's refusal to recognize the new regime supported by Egypt.<sup>492</sup>

It was also 'alleged that the British were allowing troops and aid for the Royalists to cross the frontier freely.'<sup>493</sup>

This move by the British had come as a huge shock to Nasser and enabled him to take measures to increase his mission in Yemen, and hereafter simultaneously "Egypt shared the USSR's hostility toward the British presence in the Middle East."<sup>494</sup> Therefore, Saudis restored diplomatic relations with the UK in January 1963: 'they had been cut in 1956 during the Suez War.'<sup>495</sup> As events later proved, the Saudi-British views of the Yemeni dilemma were much closer than the U.S-Saudi views; particularly during the first years of the conflict the British did not recognize the republican regime in Sana'a although the U.S did.<sup>496</sup> Because of this, Saudis re-initiated contact with Britain, which had been severed as a result of the Buraimi and Suez crises. This roused little attention in Washington. This may reflect the warm relationship between Saudi Arabia and the UK, under which the UK cooperated with Saudis in every possible way, supporting the royalists and Saudi defense plan.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Edgar O'Ballance, *The War in the Yemen* (London: Faber, 1971), 89.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> Ferris, "Soviet Support for Egypt's Intervention in Yemen, 1962-1963," (2008), 9.

<sup>495</sup> For more on Saudi-British relationships over the crisis in Yemen, see: Gause, "Saudi-Yemeni Relations." (1982), 145-179. ; Christopher Gandy, "A Mission to Yemen: August 1962-January 1963," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 2 (November 1998): 249-261, doi:10.1080/13530199808705668.

<sup>496</sup> Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen, 1962-1970* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 56.

<sup>497</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, (1985), 97. ; Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962*, (2010), 57.

Clearly, a change in the political status of the U.S. position in Yemen had been an essential goal for the Saudis since the beginning of the war. To some extent, Saudi aspiration over Yemen was one thing; and their view of the U.S. role was something else. This contradiction of policy was articulated by a message carried from Kennedy to the Saudi king. The U.S. envoy apparently had expressed to Faisal, Kennedy's deep concern over the recent course of events in Yemen, and recognized that "what is involved here is difference over means, not objective."<sup>498</sup> The fact is that the Saudi King, Faisal, wished to further Saudi's move and contemplate promoting his country's influence with help from the U.S. but it would be difficult to determine whether or not his effort was rewarded by the Kennedy administration, as he wanted, even though the close relationships improved later.

Yet, linking U.S. assistance for Egypt for the Yemeni crisis, Saudis warned that it would wind up being used to undermine Nasser's neighbors, especially Saudi Arabia.<sup>499</sup> King Faisal endeavored not just to gain the trust of the U.S. but arguably to dehumanize his opponents mainly Egypt, and claim that they were not to be trusted. Still, this process from Faisal to convince the U.S. about the imminent communist threat in Yemen, if the U.S. did not support him, proved painfully slow during the beginning of 1962. In a meeting with the State Department's representative in 1962 regarding American reluctance to help Saudi Arabia in the War of Yemen "Faisal made it clear to the U.S. that it was better for Saudi Arabia to go down fighting in Yemen rather than to be

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<sup>498</sup> JFKL, NSF, Countries Files, Yemen, Bunker/ Bunche Missions. *Letter from Kennedy to Faisal*, 1 March 1963.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 49.



assassinated later.”<sup>500</sup> In this phase of the 1960s Saudi-American relationships were tense, as Faisal had rejected Kennedy’s proposal to withdraw support from the Yemeni royalists. Faisal was determined to strengthen his position further, even after being confronted by Kennedy. All of this underscored Faisal’s apprehension over Yemen along with American reassurance.<sup>501</sup> Seeing that Saudi Arabia might be in danger, President Kennedy announced his desire to preserve Saudi Arabian integrity and following the announcement, demonstrated his intentions by ordering joint military maneuvers and training exercise by the U.S. forces with Saudi forces in Saudi Arabia.<sup>502</sup>

In short, ‘Kennedy adopted pure Cold War policies, and Faisal observed them carefully to better protect and promote Saudi interests.’<sup>503</sup> By then, “Saudi Arabia had drawn closer to the United States in an effort to strengthen the country against the threats of Communism and Arab revolutionary trends.”<sup>504</sup>

Thus, Saudi’s strategy from this point onwards seemed to have been preventing any hostile outside power from establishing itself in Yemen emerging as the predominant Saudi goal during this period, and has been recurrent policy over Yemen since then.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> PRO,FO 371/163008 (BS 1015/4), ‘*Saudi Arabia: Information from Mr. H. Kern and Mr. St. John Armitage*’, 17 December 1962.

<sup>501</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 80–83.

<sup>502</sup> De Gaury, *Faisal* (1966), 112–113.

<sup>503</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 80–81

<sup>504</sup> Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (2000),120.

<sup>505</sup> Gause III, “Saudi-Yemeni Relations 1962-1982.” (1982),179.

However, the prolonged war in Yemen tarnished Nasser's image and events on the ground in Yemen compelled the U.S. to take a more direct interest in its settlement formula.<sup>506</sup> Similarly, Nasser's reluctance to withdraw his troops from Yemen after failing to carry out his part of the Yemen disengagement agreement reflected the fact the American administration was being forced to cope with Egypt. Later in the war, when the U.S. became disappointed with Nasser, the U.S. and the UK together came to the Saudi side and supplied the Kingdom with military equipment.<sup>507</sup>

Out of this need, Ambassador Parker Hart, who was an eyewitness, argued, "President Kennedy approved Operation Hard Surface, which demonstrated to the Saudis and Egyptians the continued U.S. interest in and support for Saudi Arabian and providing a deterrent to the Egyptian operation in Saudi Arabia airspace."<sup>508</sup> Presumably, the assassination of John Kennedy and coming of President Johnson enabled Faisal to reiterate his worry that Nasser of Egypt supported a wellspring of Communism and instability in the region, "where Faisal pressed Johnson to further limit America's remaining commitments to Egypt."<sup>509</sup>

This, therefore, had regional and global ramifications for Nasser and Moscow, where they viewed the US support to Saudi Arabia as the main predicament in the Arab World. Not just inflaming regional public opinion towards Saudi Arabia

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<sup>506</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 83.

<sup>507</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 97.

<sup>508</sup> Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States* (1998), 193.

<sup>509</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 96.

and the U.S. but arguably increasing the support for Nasser and Moscow positions in the region. In light of this, Nasser further served to encourage his position and defy Saudi Arabia by “signing critical agreements between Cairo and Moscow.”<sup>510</sup>

With the overall strategy, the USSR did not pursue any set of policies for dealing with the area and has relied on “expediency and opportunism as the basis of its behavior, trying to take advantage of each opportunity for short or long term Soviet gain that presented itself.”<sup>511</sup> In many respects, the situation in Yemen provided a good example of this attitude, ‘which would ensure its interests and guarantee a substantial influence in Yemen proper.’<sup>512</sup>

More to this point, Moscow’s attitude towards Saudi Arabia changed because of its policy in Yemen. The episode confirmed Soviet intentions and their strategy of infiltration and dominance over the troubled areas in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>513</sup> In the context of Saudi support to royalty in Yemen, Moscow’s involvement, for instance, according to a Saudi politician; “was the heaviest involvement ever in the Third World.”<sup>514</sup>

In the view of Korbonski “It was the first clear-cut use of Soviet pilots in the Third World and the first time a communist country extended military assistance

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<sup>510</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 82.

<sup>511</sup> David Price, “Moscow and the Persian Gulf,” *Problems of Communism* 38, no.2 (March 1979): 2.

<sup>512</sup> Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen: 1962-1970* (1986), 67.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Al Mosaed, “The USSR and the Gulf States Relations.” (1990), 120.

to a non-communist country.”<sup>515</sup> Yet, the scope of the USSR involvement was limited in numbers and materials, as Yodfat discussed. The Soviets did not want to expose themselves publicly of their engagement and “had to restrict their presence even more, since it led to a sharp Saudi and American reaction.”<sup>516</sup> This line of argument is incorporated to a certain extent in Al-ṭāhāwe’s analysis into the Communist forces of Moscow in the Arabian Peninsula, which were always lightweight in theory and coupled with the instigation of violence behind the scene in order to achieve political objectives.<sup>517</sup> The aforementioned made the situation in Yemen look much clumsier for Moscow and led it to rely heavily on Cairo.

The significance of this opaque policy of Moscow in Yemen was twofold; firstly, trying to subjugate Egyptian foreign policy in terms of geopolitical advantage in its own prerogative. Second, Moscow gave Egypt the comforting feeling that they appreciated the peculiar nature of Egyptian-Yemeni relations. With this in mind, Moscow and Egypt through the crisis have sought to counterbalance increasing Western support and the influence of Saudi Arabia in the crisis. But as cease-fire agreements in Yemen repeatedly broke down, persistent Saudi support of the Yemeni Royalists led to increasing estrangement with Cairo.

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<sup>515</sup> Andrzej Korbonski, *The Soviet Union and the Third World: The Last Three Decades*, ed. Francis Fukuyama (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 164.

<sup>516</sup> Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula* (1983), 2.

<sup>517</sup> ‘Abd al-Kārem Al-ṭāhāwe, *Al-Mālik Fāisal Wa Al-‘lāqāt Al-Khārjīah Al-Sa‘ūdiyyah* (Cairo: al- Dār al-thqāfiyah, 2003), 44–48.

On the whole, the Soviets reverted to their harsher judgments of Saudi Arabia.<sup>518</sup> All that had changed was that a younger monarch (Faisal) now ruled in Riyadh, able to pursue with greater vigor traditional Saudi goals of hegemony based on conservatism and reaction. Hence, “by the end of the 1960s, despite a significant improvement in relations between Cairo and Riyadh, Soviet-Saudi relations remained parlous.”<sup>519</sup>

The context of the War in Yemen and its ramifications, and the presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen were key triggers for Saudi Arabia to find a new phase of alliance onset pact and influence within the Middle East and beyond. Hence, Faisal’s policy towards Communism and its by-product of “nationalism-socialism” were geared by “religious nationalism”, which was viewed in his eyes as compatible with the key interests of preserving his kingdom. This basis, as Abukhalil reminds us, was to “create a regional security Islamic alliance aimed against Communism and nationalism, over which a hue and cry was raised. This was the brainchild of Faisal and his American benefactors.”<sup>520</sup>

## Conclusions

This chapter has argued that Saudi Arabian foreign policy orientations since the beginning of the 1960s changed at the regional level from a defensive role to a more assertive one; and that the conflict within the Arab World over regional primacy and structural ideologies had grown increasingly. This indicates the role of the Cold War had become more reinforced regionally and the main

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<sup>518</sup> McLane, *Soviet-Middle East Relations* (1973), 86.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 99.

superpowers used their powers to protect their clients. As a result, this provoked hostility among the regional actors, which paved the way for utilizing their own means of political mobilizations based on regional interests.

Intrinsically, in the period from the beginning of the 1960s, Saudi enmity to Communism was intertwined with nationalist movements and hence the Saudi state became inimical to both of these ideologies, not least because Nasser and his supporters were reaching out to Moscow as the main superpower which shared the same interest of growing dismay of the Western powers in the Middle East. This was in fact the predominant foreign policy in fighting both Communism and Arabism.

In it, the conflict between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in Yemen revealed to us a consistent Saudi Arabian approach in this era; the looming threat in the borders of the Arabian Peninsula required a more robust, deterrent regional policy and alliance globally. In this period overall, Saudi Arabian and U.S. interests appeared to converge against Communism. As a result, this seems to be “a green light” of a delicate transition that prevailed during the Cold War and turned Pan-Islamism policy into a much more influential force than it had previously been.

This new approach of using Islam as a tool to combat the Soviets had guided Saudi foreign policy in the 1960s to what I might call ‘Paranoia of the Soviet Union’ in the entire Middle East, which Saudi Arabia had to respond to during this period. Hence, as the next chapter demonstrates, the period post-1958

witnessed changes in the role of Islam inside the Saudi State, which gave the religion a new lease of life in the society as the Islamic identity in the state constructed among the population and interacted with it positively, in the sense that was in the way of life at that time. Indeed, Saudi Arabia conducted this policy shrewdly and thus we can focus more on the role of Islam and its relations in the Cold War.

The adoption of pan-Islamic policy was, however, an example of the fact that any threat to the Saudi royal family's legitimacy (religious or ideological) can be fought by Islamic diplomacy, which has become a preponderant factor in the formulation of the regional and domestic foreign policy of the Saudi state. While to some extent it might be argued that Faisal's regime had succeeded in fighting the influence of Communism and nationalist movements in the Arabian Peninsula; it would be difficult to conclude that the results were matched without public support.

In order to analyze the Saudi approach during the Cold War to the Soviet Union we may attempt to understand how state and non-state actors interact and act in the State foreign policy, which had both influenced the behavior of the Saudi State and its stance with the USSR. This is in line with the assumption that the religious institutions have been a central role in the politics of Saudi Arabia and have been the source of sharp legitimacy, which they still enjoy. As such, in the next chapter I find it appropriate to dissect that policy thoroughly.

The next chapter is going to critically elaborate on the connection between the roles of Islam and “religious nationalism” with “non-state actors” in fighting communism in the Cold War.



## Chapter 5

### - Islamic Diplomacy, the role of State actors and NGOs

***"Religion is like a falcon;  
the one who controls the falcon, hunts with it."*** <sup>521</sup>

The period since Faisal took the helm of the Saudi government has not only witnessed a dramatic change of the landscape in Saudi foreign policy, but also local change. Whereas the state actors did have an impact on Saudi Arabia, in this chapter I will show how the internal actors and the non-state actors were influential in forming the Saudi regime's view about the threat and state legitimacy. For Saudis, it was not a question of choosing between the superpowers' interests; it was a matter of how best to secure their country's security against the communist threat.<sup>522</sup> The history of the twentieth century has shown that non-governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia have been inherently powerful and have a marked tendency to fall sooner or later. To be sure, the rapid growth of the non-state actor institutions during the 1960s had played directly into the state policy towards the USSR with even more serious consequences in Saudi Arabian foreign policy in the long run.

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<sup>521</sup> A famous saying articulated by King Faisal and has been circulated widely among Saudis since then.

<sup>522</sup> Although William Quandt argued that "the Saudis during the Cold War seem to weigh their security concerns first, their ideological preferences second." Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980* (1981), 45. These two terms have often been used interchangeably - and they certainly have been intertwined. But this chapter, however, will make a clear distinction that the ideological concern of Communism had shaped, framed and denoted the Saudi security perspective against Communism.

In a country such as Saudi Arabia where religion has been utilized primarily by the state to provide legitimacy for its actions, whether with the Soviet threat specifically or other “non- religious” threats generally, a closer examination in this regard will show this inevitable actor emerged as an adequate response to the challenges in the Cold War. What is being argued here is that since the 1960s the Kingdom embraced the religious development projects “Religious Engineering” which played a far more important role in the introduction of necessitated change in Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War with the Soviets. I will investigate the reasons for how the religious institutions were involved directly in fighting communism and other regional threats with a focus on a number of factors related to foreign policy orientation.

### **The religious engineering project of Islam**

Most scholarships and writings on Saudi Arabia during the 1960s and 1970s, which looked at and endorsed Islam and communism not being compatible, and that led to Saudi’s stance against the USSR. These interpretations have been in part true but also neglected the fact that internal factors in Saudi Arabia contributed in this equation. “From the outset of Faisal’s rule, Faisal’s religious foreign policy road map was laid out early in his kingship.”<sup>523</sup> However, Islam and its institutions re-emerged and began to prevail and have been inextricably linked to foreign policy and also suppressing anyone who did not believe in it.

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<sup>523</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 94.

In other words, Saudi Arabia since 1960s has been the safe haven for Muslims worldwide against waves of communism and nationalism. Rashid Khalidi saw the fear that Saudi Arabia witnessed during the Cold War as being “real and they had to counterattack the threat by using the powerful ideological weapon of Islam.”<sup>524</sup> In turn, ‘the Saudi Arabian government considered the spread of Communism in the Middle East its biggest threat and were endeavoring to combat it on the basis of their religion.’<sup>525</sup>

As such, this policy created a multifaceted aspect of Saudi Arabia where the state “focused much more intensively, and more plausibly, on Islam as the backbone of its resistance to the self-proclaimed progressive Arab regimes.”<sup>526</sup> This trend in the policy was graphically articulated by Faisal himself who viewed Islam as a way of life on the basis of participation in politics rather than cooptation. This was based upon the retention of state power over Saudi society.

Thus, the fast growth of noticeable religious groups and institutions, “at the expense of other components of civil society,”<sup>527</sup> and also “the regime allowed the religious right even more maneuver in Saudi Arabian life,”<sup>528</sup> provides a

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<sup>524</sup> Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: East* (2009), 19.

<sup>525</sup> NARA, RG59, Central Files 1964-66 (POL 23-7 NEAR E.), US Embassy, Jeddah, to the State Department, 4 May 1966.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>527</sup> I have taken this idea from: Hilal Khashan, *Arabs at the Crossroads: Political Identity and Nationalism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 120.

<sup>528</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, “Making Conversation Permissible: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia,” in *Islamic Activism: And Social Movement Theory Approached*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 254.

workable analysis in Saudi Arabia throughout the Cold War.<sup>529</sup> Saudi Arabia with considerable help from the CIA encouraged the formation of anti-socialist and communist Muslim groups, which still exist today, and represented a policy that advanced his country's position in an Islamic character at the expense of its Arab one.<sup>530</sup> The Saudi society was slowly but steadily witnessing a transformation in its social structure during the 1950's and 1960's, 'a concept was introduced in the 1960's which is nationalism: Saudis first and Muslims.'<sup>531</sup> Increasingly, and, most of all, "it was the first time Faisal was able to reaffirm Wahhabi principles in the society, especially in his personal life and his people."<sup>532</sup>

Having had warm relationships with the clerical establishment, encouraging religious consciousness was required. The way in which the Wahhabi civil servants were rooted in government agencies and supplied them with funds to amplify their message expanded Wahhabism's reach deeper into Saudi society.<sup>533</sup> The religious establishment maintained great influence over several

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<sup>529</sup> Nasih N. Ayubi used the term 'petro-Islam' for his notion described 'the ideology of Saudi regime' which was "fiercely hostile to any Pan-Arabist idea or movement and supportive to using Islamic symbolism instead". Nasih N. M. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: Tauris, 1995), 232–233.

<sup>530</sup> Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*, (1995), 130–131. Also Rachel Bronson mentioned "Faisal's efforts of constructing an Islamic milieu against Communism received undoubtedly higher –level attention in Washington and different Americans presidents put their card in his efforts." Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 91–93

<sup>531</sup> Michel G. Nehme, "Saudi Arabia: Political Implications of the Development Plans" (PhD thesis, Rutgers University, 1983), 68.

<sup>532</sup> John Sotos, "Principles, Pragmatism, and the Al Saud: The Role of Islamic Ideals in Political Dissent in Saudi Arabia 1919-1982." (PhD thesis, The American University, 1982), 138.

<sup>533</sup> Commings, *The Wahhabi Mission* (2006), 105.

domains in the social, judicial and religious arena and thereby has given the political authority a strong interest in controlling the agents of the religious discourse.<sup>534</sup> In fact, religion played a role in Faisal's time at least to combat any threats and arguably gain legitimacy. Davied Commins revealed "the Saudi state has incorporated religious norms in ways that took advantage of their legitimacy without truly diminishing their authority in matters essential to Wahhabism."<sup>535</sup>

The consolidation of authority inside the Saudi state led the Saudi regime to cow the Saudi peoples, if not the entire Muslim World, of Communism as the greatest threat to them. To this end, however, Riyadh tried to reconcile Saudi Arabia's blueprint of Islamic solidarity with the Arab world after the alienation the Arab states experienced in the 1950s. Joseph Kechichian, went to great lengths to explain Faisal's views on religious state institutions and how he vowed to turn them around and convince other Arab states that "the tragedy that befell Arabs was due to neglecting ideological precepts that were included in Islam."<sup>536</sup>

Thomas Hegghammer summed up Faisal's Islamic policy in the 1960 and 1970s. He stated what he perceived that pan-Islamism was entrenched in Saudi Arabia under Faisal's leadership and that policy "was a foreign policy doctrine rather

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<sup>534</sup> Nabil Mouline, "Enforcing and Reinforcing the State's Islam: The Functioning of the Committee of Senior Scholars," in *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, ed. Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 65-66.

<sup>535</sup> Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission* (2006), 113.

<sup>536</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 174.

than a political unification project that subsequently served a domestic political purpose as to boost the Saudi regime's religious credentials."<sup>537</sup>

This doctrine thereby did not separate the internal factors from external factors but arguably advocated for Islamic alignment inside and outside the kingdom against the Soviet Union and its allies in the Arab World. Similarly, George Lenczowski argued that 'Saudi Arabia's foreign policy under Faisal was dictated by its Islamic and conservative orientation which emphasized for Islamic solidarity, a strong anti-communist and hence also anti-Soviet stance.'<sup>538</sup> Thereby, the association between Islam and politics in Saudi Arabia had made "the "Islamicness" of Saudi foreign policy under Faisal whereby William Quandt postulated that policy "is not merely a reflection of official ideology, nor is it only lip service. It is the connection between political realities in Saudi Arabia and developments in the world beyond what makes Islamic concerns an important dimension of Saudi foreign policy."<sup>539</sup>

Of course, Islam has been the main tool and the ideological nature in the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia since its establishment, but the promotion of Islamic diplomacy and its dimensions under King Faisal was exceptional given the fact that Faisal's personal characteristics and predilection with Islam were the important predictors that shaped his policy vision which was not changed until he was assassinated. The rule of religion during his tenure was best described

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<sup>537</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 17.

<sup>538</sup> George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4th edition (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 1980), 606.

<sup>539</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 36.

thus 'Faisal had a warm relationship with the clerical establishment, whereby his uncompromising hostility towards Communism and Arab Nationalism constituted his policy vision in the Cold War and permeated into the institutions of the state itself.'<sup>540</sup> Importantly, different religious actors within the Saudi polity had had a lion's stake during Faisal's policy in reining in Communism. To establish this goal a careful articulation of this policy was transferred through an official message from Faisal to President Johnson of the US articulating the same goal of the US and Saudi Arabia of fighting communism and expressing that "we fight on religious grounds what you fight for doctrinaire reasons... that way we could put an end to the spread of Communism in the World."<sup>541</sup>

Hence, it can be said that the way in which Saudi Arabia dealt with the Soviet threat differed somewhat from other crises. Saudi Arabia wanted to indoctrinate a "religious line that referred to the struggle against Communism as "Jihad" and "martyrdom".<sup>542</sup> This was the result of the ideologically hostile environment that prevailed in Saudi Arabia towards other leftist Muslims and also Soviets who were a source of abiding concern to Riyadh. This policy can also be considered a major harmony approach of the Saudis during the Cold War, in terms of threats predominating outside and challenge inside that may be drawn upon by the state in dealing with the USSR.

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<sup>540</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 97.

<sup>541</sup> NRAR, RG59, Central file 1964-66 (POL 23-7 NEAR E.), *State to US Embassy in Jeddah*, 26 February 1966.

<sup>542</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2004), 102.

This created an extraordinary 'harmony' between internal and external demands that was noted by Long and Maisel where "the Islamic foreign policy and national security policies were backed by strong public consensus on preserving Islamic values and norms at home and throughout the Muslim world."<sup>543</sup> In line with policy, 'Umar ḥleeq usually referred to Saudi Arabia and Islam during the Cold War 'as the linchpin of any Saudi activities in the region and beyond against their enemies the 'idolaters' mushrikīn and mulḥdeen.' <sup>544</sup>

Interestingly, many Islamists and religious figures during the Cold War started to flee to Saudi Arabia as "Saudi Arabia had been giving refuge to the God-Fearing opponents of the Arab World's secular regimes "pro-Soviet" and particularly members of the Muslim brotherhood."<sup>545</sup> Saudi's strategy was to promote and combine "godlessness at home and abroad"<sup>546</sup> in particular, trying to reassert Saudi Arabia position in targeting the pro-Soviet states in the Arab World to be under Islamic control. Therein lies the lens from which we can understand Saudi Arabian policy to the USSR, as Daniel Bayman researched the viewpoint of Saudi Arabian leaders concerning their centerpiece of religion and attacking their opponents. Bayman pointed to the fact that "throughout the century Al-Saud drew on this relationship and portrayed themselves as pious Sunni Muslim

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<sup>543</sup> Long and Maisel, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, 2010, 145.

<sup>544</sup> ḥleeq, *Ḥadīth Fi Al-Syāsah Al-Khārjīah Al-Sa'ūdīyah* (1967), 308–309.

<sup>545</sup> Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom* (2009), 54.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.



alternative to rival ideology such as Arab Nationalism, Communism, or Iranian-backed Shi'a fundamentalism."<sup>547</sup>

Abdullah Sindi concentrated on what he categorized as King Faisal and Pan-Islamism whereby he indicated the concept of religious aspects in Faisal's foreign policy. Sindi wrote, "Faisal's pan- Islamism theory was presented as a determinant of policy that would provide the necessary justification for combating Communism and for opposing socialism and revolutionism."<sup>548</sup> He went on to draw an interesting conclusion by pointing out that "Faisal's pan-Islamic alliance had three major international objectives: inter-governmental co-operation among Islamic states, elimination of Soviet influence and radicalism in the Arab World, and mobilization of the rest of the Muslim World behind the Arab struggle against Israel."<sup>549</sup>

As a consequence, this doctrine continued to spark an innovation in domestic interaction, which paved the way towards creating conditions, which enabled religion and also other elements, in dealing with the Soviets.<sup>550</sup> These features of religion were entirely consistent with the extent to which Faisal's policy dealt with the USSR. Yet, since Saudis are a highly religious people, religion has played

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<sup>547</sup> Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections States That Sponsor Terrorism: International Relations and International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 225–226.

<sup>548</sup> Abdullah M. Sindi, "King Faisal and Pan- Islamism," in *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Willard A. Beling (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1980), 189.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> It is mentioned that Faisal "in exchange for crude oil policy" was reputed to have said that he did not want "to have even a single Communist nail imported into Saudi Arabia". See: Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 607.

a somewhat significant role in a rising sense of Saudi national identity (antipathy to communism), which has constituted social coherence in society. To Faisal, Communism was the main product of a primitive factor and cultural backwardness that basically held back Islamic modernity.

Thus, Faisal laid the groundwork for Saudi foreign policy that promoted Islam as the main vehicle to fight the evil powers such as Communism and Zionism.<sup>551</sup> In the early 1960s and 1970s, 'Saudi Arabia witnessed a massive influx primarily from religious figures into the society which was the source of a vast social movement that produced its own countercultural and its own organization which almost reached all fields of the social arena.'<sup>552</sup> "Some of these people were ultra-conservative or radicals who were persecuted by their governments or unwilling to accept official ideologies and reforms."<sup>553</sup> In contrast, those religious figures worked inside the kingdom and emphasized solidarity towards Saudi Arabia to the USSR. Therefore, As Determann hinted "in the 1950s and 1960s a political climate inside the kingdom opposed to communism and socialism that curbed the development of social and economic history in Saudi Arabia and this tendency received further strengthening during the Arab Cold War."<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Long, "King Faisal World View." (1980), 181.

<sup>552</sup> Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (2011), 51. Yet, the official recognition of Non-Wahhabis as Muslims came in 1954 when the Saudi Great Grant Mufti Muhammed Bin Ibrahim met for the first time formally with senior non-Wahhabis from Egypt and Tunisia. See; Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia (2010)*, 23.

<sup>553</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* (1988), 24.

<sup>554</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 179–180.

This development led to two key factors in legitimizing Riyadh's policy towards Moscow. In the first place, religious integrity inside the kingdom empowered the government to adopt a populist hostility orientated to Arab nationalism, leftist and its main backer globally, the USSR. The second element was deflecting domestic pressure by principally referring to the main enemy who wanted to destroy the religion, by attacking the stronger opponent of Islam, which was communism.<sup>555</sup> As Hegghammer observed "the government came to see promotion of pan-Islamist causes as a useful way to deflect some of the internal domestic dissent."<sup>556</sup> From here, the defensive policy of Islam has advocated the Saudi case against communism in different countries in the Islamic world to generate an Islamic pressure on Muslims to relinquish cooperation with Moscow and its allies in the Middle East, principally, Egypt. This is in line with Goldberg who argued, "The Saudi religious ideology wanted to eliminate the Soviet influence that has become a cornerstone of the Saudi's peninsular and regional policy."<sup>557</sup>

Despite having religious foundations and motivations, Saudi policy with communism should not be viewed as 'religious concerns just inside the kingdom' as described by Mafaz Kurdi.<sup>558</sup> Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s appeared to be apprehensive about Islam and its existence globally. This is not to suggest

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<sup>555</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 23.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Jacob Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia's Attitude toward the USSR, 1977-1980: Between Saudi Pragmatism and Islamic Conservation," in *The USSR and the Muslim World: Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 261-62.

<sup>558</sup> Kurdi Mafaz, "Saudi Arabia: Perspective on Oil, Foreign Policy, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-1980" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1982), 103.

that Riyadh was unconcerned with the type of stability inside. But it promoted Islamic values indirectly. By strengthening and supporting the creation of strong Islamic governmental institutions, Saudi Arabia facilitated a dual process of filtering up and filtering down. As AbuKhalil noticed 'Anti-communist literature spread in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the Middle East and Muslim world and was funded by the Saudi government in order to gather Muslim states and their intellectuals as one entity against the likes of Communism and nationalism.'<sup>559</sup> The emphasis on the danger of communism led society to the heart of that transitional process. Moḥammed al-Qṣaimi makes an interesting comment about Faisal's unique insight into the practice of dealing with the danger of communism. He argued, "Faisal reared and trained in a religio-political milieu wherein there is no separation between religion and state."<sup>560</sup>

Such understanding of local culture and expectations was a key feature of engagement. Al- Qasimi reiterates this point that 'Faisal in his endeavors to mobilize the Saudis and project himself as a leader who could stand against any threat from Communism and Zionism in order to evoke in the Saudi people a sense of patriotism and self-confidence.'<sup>561</sup> Put more plainly, Faisal insinuated that communist forces resist Islam because Islam undermines atheism and also the foundations of communism, which is based on denying the existence of the Almighty, the destruction of human values and the dignity of the human being.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 190.

<sup>560</sup> Moḥammed Al-Qṣaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion: The Islamic Oratory of King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2000), 33.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 52–53.

<sup>562</sup> Ahmed Assah, *Miracle of the Desert Kingdom* (London: Johnson, 1969), 104.

Apparently, Saudi Arabia consistently championed the principles that underpin Islam and its missions and activities to fight irreligious ideologies. This indicates a concurrence of values that led to “activating the old radical Islamist allies with which it had worked various and crannies of the global Cold War and the Arab Cold war to help well-armed forces over the Islamic world against the Soviets.”<sup>563</sup> This notion was, according to Joseph Kechichian, “due to the Soviet Union being viewed as a genuine source of threat to Saudi Security.”<sup>564</sup> Not only a threat of the state but also rejecting communism as being what Muslims believe enabled King Faisal to state that “Communism and religion were like oil and water; they simply did not mix.”<sup>565</sup> The influence of the Soviet threat combined with the thinking of Islamic leadership led to a proliferation of an anti-Communist or anti-non-Islamic course in Saudi Arabia. This happened in the midst of the Cold War at the expense of tolerance towards religious minorities even among Muslims themselves. The struggles with foreign ideologies made it an attractive tool for the Saudi government to label Communism and Nationalism “as sources for elimination of spirituality values of Islam.”<sup>566</sup>

However, in his speech at the mass rally in Mecca in 1963, Faisal stated that the Islamic principles which guide Saudi Arabia and Islamic countries should not be characterized as ‘Western values’ but were in fact ‘Islamic values.’ He asserted, “Saudi Arabia does not believe in Socialism nor Communism, nor in any doctrine

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<sup>563</sup> Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis* (2009), 33.

<sup>564</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal* (2008), 188.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>566</sup> ‘ Al-ṭāhāwe, *Al-Mālik Fāisal* (2003), 179.

other than that of the Muslim Code.”<sup>567</sup> In correlation, “Faisal’s underlying argument was that Muslims have the best doctrine ever prescribed for mankind, that is, the Qur’an.”<sup>568</sup> This statement from Faisal and others gave the Saudi people and extremists a new lease of life. What I am suggesting here is that Faisal’s period and his moving speeches allowed Saudi militants to become entrenched in society, not least because of the political legitimacy of his regime, but arguably it set in motion an agitation of public opinion to use Islam as a core module to “strengthen political ties among Muslim countries.”<sup>569</sup> Astutely, Faisal came to the realization that Islamic slogans did help to politicize and mobilize Muslim peoples and also assert “himself” as a factor to be reckoned with in the Muslim World. Consequently, the equation of Islam not being compatible with Communism had gone considerably deep in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim World towards constraining any ‘accommodationist’ policy toward the USSR.

Sheean’s reference to the battle undertaken by Faisal for Islam is also instrumental as an explanation for Faisal dealing with the Soviet threat.<sup>570</sup> This battle manifested itself in Saudi Arabia clearly during the Cold War against Communism and secular Arab States for the struggle for the country’s existence. The perceived Soviet threat to Islam as the ideology for the Saudi State meant that Faisal “personifies the idea that Saudi Arabia is the defender of the Arab

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<sup>567</sup> Gaury, *Faisal* (1966), 159.

<sup>568</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 71.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Sheean, *Faisal* (1975), 151.

Land and the mother-peninsula, against the invader and in the most secular and practical sense he stands guard over the rights and privileges of its people.”<sup>571</sup>

Thus Riyadh understood the prevailing situation in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s from Arab nationalism and the leftist growing movement, and as William Quandt explained “the Saudi leadership viewed radical ideologies-Nasserism, Ba'athism, Arab socialism, and communism -as disruptive forces that served to advance Soviet interests in the Arab world.”<sup>572</sup> As a result, the fight against the Arab nationalist revolution in the Arab World had been framed in more Islamic logic to reach out to a wider audience, which ultimately served the state’s ability towards fighting Communism. In other words, Saudi’s policy in the Arab World was handled in dealing with the USSR framework, which impinged on Saudi Arabia’s relations with the Islamic world where he strengthened links between Islamic countries while intensifying the sense of fear and suspicion of nationalism, and Egypt, as it had close ties with the USSR and its Arab sister revolutionary states, like Syria, ‘who endeavored to promote a Soviet-sponsored anti-imperialist front against the US and its allies in the Middle East.’<sup>573</sup>

The ideal type of Saudi’s Islamic diplomacy had been developing the idea of using religion to organize politics since the early 1950s, subservient to the state as opposed to other beliefs. This ideal type “was trying to build a religious

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> William B. Quandt, “Riyadh between the Superpowers,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 44 (October 1, 1981): 48, doi:10.2307/1148544.

<sup>573</sup> Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 137.

counterpoint to Nasser's pan-Arabism."<sup>574</sup> Taking the aforementioned into account, 'Washington viewed Faisal's attempts with ambivalence, but if he could use religion to keep certain countries out of Nasser's orbit (and by extension the Soviet's) it was a useful exercise.'<sup>575</sup> In fact, this orientation of fighting communism helped the U.S., "which did not distinguish between the different ideological strips."<sup>576</sup> As an anchor point, the State department informed the Saudi government that 'the US, as a non-Muslim country and not a state in the region that had not in the past felt it appropriate to comment on Islamic solidarity, would serve to buttress the solidarity among key Islamic states to recognize the communist threat in the Middle East.'<sup>577</sup>

Nevertheless, the fundamental problem with U.S. policy in the Middle East since the Second World War II was that it analyzed regional crises from the perspective of its global conflict with the Soviet Union.<sup>578</sup> Therefore, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. had to work together during the Cold War from the perspective of the global conflict with the Soviet Union. These massive events created a need for confrontation with the Communist threat and, as a matter of encouragement; the U.S. began supporting the Islamic front that was prodded to attack the USSR and its anti-Muslim ways.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 93.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 190.

<sup>577</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69 (POL SAUD-US) *State to the US Embassy, Jeddah*, 16 January 1967.

<sup>578</sup> Martin Harrison, *Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy: Relations with the Superpowers*, Occasional Papers Series (University of Durham. Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies), no. 46 (Durham: University of Durham, 1995), 19.

<sup>579</sup> Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (1995), 161.



To this end, the era of Faisal elevated the U.S.-Saudi relationship, which had contributed to its foreign policy to oppose Communism on the basis of a dogmatic adherence to a Manichean worldview: "You are either with us or against us."<sup>580</sup> Thus negative effects towards Saudi Arabian opponents accelerated which led to the impression that it has been a US stooge since the Cold War,<sup>581</sup> not to mention that 'Faisal's pro-American position caused him to be the butt of much criticism in the Arab World.'<sup>582</sup>

Yet, Saudi Arabia realized the anti-American tide that swept most parts of the Arab world and wanted to distance the country from the US "so as to register its solidarity with its brethren Palestinians and Arabs."<sup>583</sup> The intended drive for Saudi Arabia to accept US security during the Cold War was the protection against Communism in combination with the rise of Arab nationalism. This way was underpinned by looking towards the US for help, particularly, as Gerges perceived that "when they were under pressure from their opponents local actors felt no qualms about inviting the great powers to intervene on their side."<sup>584</sup> Hence, "as a weak, rich, pro-Western state, against Communism, Saudi Arabia has faced significant security threats and has had to become highly dependent on the U.S. for protection."<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 188.

<sup>581</sup> "Pragmatic Faisal realized that Saudi Arabia had to cooperate with the US, but also to distance itself from the latter's bungling in the Arab World, and on no account become involved in confrontation with Nasser". Alexei Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 211.

<sup>582</sup> Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 289.

<sup>583</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 42.

<sup>584</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 153–154.

<sup>585</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 18.

Domestically, “the official Wahhabi remained silent on the alliance with the U.S. and its various phases throughout the twentieth-century,”<sup>586</sup> and “they also looked safe back then and not politically revolutionary.”<sup>587</sup>

Internationally, nonetheless, in this period and arguably until now, as Safran put it, “The Saudis needed the United States’ support to deal with some of the threats and depended on it entirely for a basic solution to any problem even if the problem differed, sometimes greatly from the Saudis.”<sup>588</sup> Yet, Faisal slyly made use of his alliance with the US to put forward his views and religious legitimacy in the struggle against Arab nationalism and Communism, which provided him with acceptance in US policy around the region.<sup>589</sup> “His view of the world was a Manichean one, Russia and Communism represent evil and if the US is not good it is very much the lesser of two evils.”<sup>590</sup> These views had led him when he was in the U.S. to articulate that “Soviet exploitation of anti-Americanism dictates that the U.S. should have good relations with the Arab World.”<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43.

<sup>587</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 190.

<sup>588</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 214.

<sup>589</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 76. However, Mejcher argued that “Faisal’s recourse to Islamic solidarity did not meet with US approval either”, see: Mejcher, “King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud in the Arena of World Politics,” (2004): 23.

<sup>590</sup> David Hirst, “Faisal Fills the Breach of Faith,” *The Guardian*, November 19, 1973, 2015-02-24, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian (1821-2003) and The Observer (1791-2003) pg. 11.

<sup>591</sup> Drew Middleton, “Faisal Says U.S. Policies Spur Rampant Mideast Communism,” At

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=980CE0D81230E034BC4B51DFB3668383679EDE&legacy=true>. *The New York Times*, May 23, 1968. (Accessed 25 February 2015).

This, however, led Faisal to explain to the Saudi peoples that his hatred towards the USSR was not related to imperialism or the Western Side, particularly the US. While US support to Israel unconditionally made Saudi Arabia, as an American ally, subject to criticism in the Arab world,<sup>592</sup> but Faisal seemed to interpret this as the sole reason and the driving force for making the Arab states more radical and champion of Communist values.<sup>593</sup>

In 1962, Faisal told the nation, "It is true that we believe neither in socialism, nor Communism, nor any doctrine other than of the Muslim Code, we believe only in Islam."<sup>594</sup> "The United States has offered us its friendship and support and we accepted its offer. No strings were attached to this friendship and support. "If such readiness for cooperation means imperialism? Then, history has shown us how Egypt asked for Khrushchev to side with Egypt during the Suez incident, should be Egypt then he considered as a Russian colony? Following from that, Faisal described his nation's relation with the US as a friendly country, which had the same interests. He stated, "Only friendship and support were offered to us and we accepted them. Could this be considered imperialism?"<sup>595</sup>

In essence, 'these views from Faisal should be considered as views with flexibility not a blueprint for policy action, which explain ambivalence towards the U.S. for protecting the Arabs and the Muslims from Communism and also as

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<sup>592</sup> Ghāsy Rbāb'h, *Al-Wlyāt Al-Mthdydh Wa Al-Tiḥad Al-Swfyte Wa Al-Ṣyra' Fe Al-Sharq Al-Awṣṭ 1967-1987* (Aman: Dār al-fekr, 1989), 159.

<sup>593</sup> Tāj al-Sārhan, *Al-Syāsah Al-Khārjīah Al-Sa'ūdīyah Fi 'ad Al-Malik Fāiṣl Bin Abd Alaziz*. (Al-khrṭom: al- Dār al-'rbiayah, 2000), 22.

<sup>594</sup> De Gaury, *Faisal*, 195.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

the protector of Israel.’<sup>596</sup> This inconsistent tendency throughout the Cold War had a backlash inside the kingdom itself. Traditionally, this approach had largely generated and resulted in much imbalance inside the Saudi state of how a leading Muslim country has been a major part and strongly associated with the US policy in the Middle East (or the colonial power), as some preachers inside Saudi Arabia believed in these rumors and spread among the population.<sup>597</sup> Then, it can be said that this ambivalence in Saudi foreign policy during the Cold War set the stage for the development of Jihadists who were already much harder in tone towards Communism and nationalism than the King himself and also the government.

### **The predominance of pan-Islamism in Saudi foreign policy** <sup>598</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s the discussion on the role of Islam in relation to Saudi policy to the USSR and Arab nationalism throughout the Cold War was reasserted.<sup>599</sup> Thus, in the decade that followed, much of the debate, which had been rephrased in a broad framework on macro-levels about the role and characteristics of Islamic ideology were critically re-examined. “Pan-Islamism

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<sup>596</sup> Long, “King Faisal World View.” (1982),181.

<sup>597</sup> An anecdote, which a religious Saudi figure told me in Istanbul 2012, that “in 1960s and 1970s the Saudi government gave us more opportunities to challenge the Soviets leverage in the Muslim World by providing us with a logistic and financial supports to travel and carry out our message of the powerful weapon of Islam. Regrettably, now “implying after 2001 onwards” we cannot preach outside, which is more important than inside, but thanks for Uncle Sam.”

<sup>598</sup> In this section, I utilize the concept of framing Pan- Islamism from Thomas Hegghammer’s book “Jihad in Saudi Arabia”(2010). Although this concept finds similar roots and is mutually constitutive in the period I am writing about, this concept will be more clearly defined, as a point of orientation.

<sup>599</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985); Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* (1988); Long, “King Faisal World View.” (1980); Sheean, *Faisal* (1975).

had long constituted an important feature of Saudi politics, but this new pan-Islamism represented a macro-nationalism, which transcended the nation-states in the Muslim world.”<sup>600</sup> After all, as Chubin indicated, “pan Islamism policy in the Muslim world alludes to tight Islamic “bloc or alliance” effectively united in a state foreign policy.”<sup>601</sup> Similarly, Manfred Halpern argued that in the middle of the Cold War ‘whenever Islam asserts itself as an active political force today, it is not in the form of a traditional religion but as a modern political ideology.’<sup>602</sup>

Yet, a primary observation when describing the re-emergence of the Pan-Islamist model in Saudi Arabia is that a clearly identifiable method does not exist on paper. Those who contribute to “Pan- Islamism” frequently underline the policies of the Saudi State to fight Communism and overpower it from Afghanistan as from 1979.<sup>603</sup> What is discussed less frequently, however, is how the rejection of Communism and nationalist movements was in line with the State policy of promoting Islam and its values abroad. The policy with Communism further strengthened the notion of using Islam where it became the matrix of the State from the 1960s onwards. Ralph Braibanti offered a nuanced account of Faisal’s policy within political development theory, where he mentioned that “the powerful emotional, religious and ideological force of

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<sup>600</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia,” *International Affairs* 84, no.4 (July 1, 2008): 703–0704, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00733.x.

<sup>601</sup> Shahram Chubin, “A Pan-Islamic Movement- Unity or Fragmentation?,” in *Islam in a Changing World: Europe and the Middle East*, ed. Jørgen Bæk Simonsen and Anders Jerichow (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 42.

<sup>602</sup> Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), foreword xii.

<sup>603</sup> See for example: Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010); Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*(2010).

Islamic unity canonically sustained by the Islamic doctrines of Umāh and mīlah and this force is the tacit dimension of Islam.”<sup>604</sup>

In this time the significant strengthening of Islam throughout the world combined with the shrewd use of political and economic structures had been an important gesture of Saudi’s doctrine.<sup>605</sup> Since then, Saudi’s Pan-Islamic policy theory consisted of three major tenets. ‘Firstly was a distinctive Islamic mission, second presented as a determinant of policy that would provide the necessary justification for combatting Communism and for opposing revolution and finally supranational foundation of Pan- Islamic political organization.’<sup>606</sup>

Within this discussion, and in the early 1960s the conundrum of Pan-Islamism was established in Saudi Arabia and the main contours of its principles directed to the threats from Communism and Arab nationalism, which did have an intrinsic power in Saudi society. From a macro-perspective, the local landscape evolved according to a number of inherent opportunities and constraints. Firstly, because Saudi Arabia has the guardianship “custodianship” of two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the protection and spread of Islam “are held to be the

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<sup>604</sup> Ralph Braibanti, “Saudi Arabia in the Context of Political Development,” in *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Willard A. Beling (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1982), 37.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 40. However, David Long, for example, mentioned ‘Faisal laid the groundwork for Saudi foreign economic assistance that has become one of the most generous in the world. Saudi aid priorities, continue to be: the Arab states first, the greater Islamic world second, and finally the non- Islamic Third world, “the latter” means to oppose the expansion of radicalism and communism as a common threat’. See” Long, “King Faisal World View,” (1982)181. For more detail about Saudi economic assistance during the Cold War, see also Barradah, “Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Policy: 1945-83” (1989), 247–253.

<sup>606</sup> Sindi, “King Faisal and Pan- Islamism.” (1980), 189.

primary objective and vital duties.”<sup>607</sup> Thus, an innovative and elaborate mobilizing of religious roles was achieved, revolving around local and Arabism (in the Gulf) chosen committees, based on a rotating leadership who embraced a variety of religious factions. Alongside the internal dynamics, the external environment had also changed. All services were provided for, in an effort to free Arab and Muslim people from the grip of Communism.

Thus, John Anthony acknowledged the fact that, “reports of discrimination against Muslims anywhere in the world usually elicit an immediate response from Riyadh.”<sup>608</sup> As such, the Saudi political scientist Hafiz acknowledged that in the 1960s Saudi Arabian foreign policy moved on the Islamic front that had been characteristic features of “advocating fundamental Islamic ideology,”<sup>609</sup> “which gave the regime a momentary legitimacy boost.”<sup>610</sup> As mentioned above, Islamic foreign policy had become the pivotal ideology to Saudi Arabia in the Cold War and the main embodiment of hatred towards Communism. Alison Pargeter added “While these efforts were driven partly by missionary zeal, they were also strongly motivated by politics, namely the politics of the Cold War.”<sup>611</sup> One could argue that Saudi Arabia sought to incorporate and take advantage of the Communist threat in ways that facilitated new religious norms of the emergence of extreme pan- Islamist policy without affecting state legitimacy.

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<sup>607</sup> Mafaz, “Saudi Arabia: Perspective on Oil, Foreign Policy, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-1980.” (1982), 98.

<sup>608</sup> John D Anthony, “Foreign Policy: The View from Riyadh,” *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 79.

<sup>609</sup> Hafiz, “Changes in Saudi Foreign Policy Behavior 1964-1975.” (1980), 70.

<sup>610</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 30.

<sup>611</sup> Alison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe* (London : I. B. Tauris, 2008), 21.

After all, as Hegghammer has indicated, “the most significant specificity of pan-Islamist orientation is that socio-revolutionary and violence were much more directed against non- Muslims.”<sup>612</sup>

As such, it appeared that the pan-Islamic doctrine was associated with Muslim suffering and hence Saudis attempted to convince Muslim peoples on different occasions that the only way to preserve Islamic values was by “developing alarmist discourse about external threats,”<sup>613</sup> combined by a complex set of interrelated Islamic factors. During 1960s, Faisal had returned the Kingdom to its Wahhabism in its most extreme form that featured in his exclusionary policies, reverberating that no less fervent in Muslims' rights of denying Communism.<sup>614</sup> To that aim, Saudi Arabia under Faisal's leadership encouraged its peoples to undertake action against Communism and other subversive forces in the Arab World whereby he had to convince Muslims of the need for participation in that mission in several forms.<sup>615</sup>

Therefore, fostering these feelings of Muslim solidarity and unity were key in Saudi's policy of unleashing pan-Islamic policy. From this vantage point, Faisal created a social reality strongly connected with the pan- Islamists that referred to feelings of struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>616</sup> Consequently, he painted a grim picture of the Communist forces in Muslim lands, far beyond the

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<sup>612</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 230.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.,18.

<sup>614</sup> Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold* (1999), 284.

<sup>615</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 4th edition, Contemporary Issues in the Middle East (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 113.

<sup>616</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 72.



strength in the Middle East, 'which gave him more strategic depth personally because it drew to his side another important audience, namely, the non- Arab Muslims.'<sup>617</sup>

Consequently, Saudi Arabia regularly employed the powerful influence of pan-Islamism in the 1960s, which led to a proliferation of Islam and its principles not just in Saudi Arabia but also arguably in the entire Arabian Peninsula. This power of the ideology of pan-Islamism "gained momentum due to petro-Islam."<sup>618</sup> With increasing oil revenues in the 1960s, the Saudi government continued to employ and sponsor Islam inside and outside the kingdom and especially after the Egyptian defeat of 1967.<sup>619</sup> It was obvious that oil-generated wealth constitutes the power factor, 'which has enabled Saudi Arabia to engage in an active foreign policy in support of its ideological principles.'<sup>620</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the final nail in the coffin in Arab nationalism was sounded by the calamitous 1967 War with Israel. In the wake of the war, Arabs realized that their pre-war expectations were largely illusions and that a new line of foreign policy had to be developed. As a result, Saudi Arabia showed a vast interest in conducting the pan-Islamist policy as a

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State* (1995), 232.

<sup>619</sup> Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 60.

<sup>620</sup> Emile A. Nakhleh, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: A Policy Analysis*, Foreign Affairs Study 26 (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), 53.

substitute for Arab nationalism.<sup>621</sup> All along, petro-Islam is fiercely hostile to any pan-Arabist idea, Communist idea and strongly supportive of movements that use Islamic symbolism instead.<sup>622</sup>

From this perspective, pan-Islamism was deemed the sole unifying force for all Muslims to form an Islamic pact to combat Communism and Zionism and 'absorb part of its momentum by providing an alternative capable of achieving Arab unity without alienating non-Arab Muslims.'<sup>623</sup> In one important aspect, Saudi Arabia sought to form a pan-Islamist policy that facilitated a political and international dimension doctrine in the course of the 1960s. This policy manifested itself as a movement and developed particularly through "state" and "Islamic non-states actors" when convenient, through pan-Islamists benefiting from Saudi funding to extend the Saudi support for Muslim causes around the world.<sup>624</sup>

However, the use of pan-Islamist policies, at the early stages, was instrumental in fighting communism and was a vehicle to spread Saudi propaganda and in combating Communism and deterring the Soviet action from deriving maximum territorial gain and political influence in the Arab and Muslim World.<sup>625</sup> This led to laying the first stones of constructing pan-Islamist policy in Saudi Arabian

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<sup>621</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 92–93; I will elaborate on the implication of Arab-Israeli wars in Faisal's policy with the USSR and motivational elements offered by political Islam, as well as other sources, in more depth in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

<sup>622</sup> Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State* (2003), 233.

<sup>623</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 71.

<sup>624</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 18.

<sup>625</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 192.

foreign policy. This move was also motivated by political considerations; foremost among these was Faisal's plan to contain, if not eliminate, Arab nationalism and socialism.<sup>626</sup> This sentiment against Communism was reflected in Faisal's credo of the importance of forming pan-Islamism, which sought to appeal to the Islamic community. So, how did Faisal find the encouragement mechanism of mobilization of Muslims?

The challenge from atheist communism and its more moderate version "secular socialism" forced Faisal to look for means to observe the Quran and Sunna and reject any ideology laws that contradict them.<sup>627</sup> To bolster the image of Islamism and reject Communism, the phrase "Islam is not compatible with communism" was regularly employed by Faisal.

The most striking example of this endeavor was captured in the messages that Vassiliev cited from a high Saudi official in 1964 saying:

"We were visiting the king of Afghanistan, Moḥammed Zahir Shah. Afghan protocol demanded that the diplomatic corps be introduced to the visiting head of state before the head of the host state invited him to dinner.... The Soviet ambassador, who spoke Arabic, said to Faisal: "Your Majesty, the Soviet Union was the first to recognize your father's government. Why not open an embassy in Moscow and not recognize the Soviet Union?" Faisal answered him while I stood

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<sup>626</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2010), 92.

<sup>627</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 335.

beside him: "Mister Ambassador, go to Moscow and tell them to recognize God, and tomorrow I shall open an embassy in Moscow."<sup>628</sup>

Additionally, Saudi Arabia carried out a public campaign on the threat of Communism and its proxy' states in the Arab World. At some point Pan Islamism became the goal of the Saudi State, even if not articulated explicitly at the time. Thus the 1967 defeat was intolerable and created a vacuum of power and ideology, which allowed Saudi Arabia and its pan-Islamism sense to prevail in the Middle East.<sup>629</sup> To achieve this aim, Saudi Arabia launched a wide diplomatic campaign in all Muslim countries to promote pan-Islamism and increase his commitment to the ūmmah eventually culminating in the rehabilitation of Muslim society as a whole. Riyadh went even further calling for international Islamic conferences as means to supersede pan- Arabism and Communism and take the wind out of the sails of Arab nationalism.<sup>630</sup>

Moreover, as Mūhammed Fakash noted, "King Faisal energetically encouraged and supported fundamentalist Islamic movements throughout the region in order to counter the ideological offensive of the left."<sup>631</sup> At this time, 'the Soviets did not seem to understand the depth of Saudi enmity towards Communism (a pillar of Faisal's policy) and any Soviet involvement in the area. The Saudis described the spread of Soviet influence in the region at this time as "the

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 77.

<sup>630</sup> Mahmud A. Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East: Fundamentalism in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997), 93.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

Communist cancer in the body of the Muslim World.”<sup>632</sup> At the peak of the communist threat in the 1960s, the Saudis funded many movements in the Muslim World, beginning with the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt to other Pakistanis and other movements to influence the religious trends inside these movements against the Communist threat.<sup>633</sup>

The response of Moscow to the pan-Islamist project clearly showed that the Soviets were not willing to consider Islam a positive factor in reality, or even potentially in the Middle East. Yaacov Ro'i wrote in 1984 'Pan- Islamism was perceived as a reactionary, religious-political current that had originally been used by ruling exploiter classes to foment national and religious discord and stifle the revolutionary movement in the Middle East.'<sup>634</sup> This did not mean, however, that Moscow's view of Islam, as a religion, was negative. Even, if Moscow exhibited some sensitivity to the potential contagion of political Islam, the very existence of a sizable Muslim population within the USSR may facilitate relative coexistence and tolerance towards Muslims.<sup>635</sup> In many cases, Soviet Muslims were an important asset for Moscow in the promotion of Soviet foreign

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<sup>632</sup> Aryeh Yodfat, *In the Direction of the Persian Gulf: The Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf* (London : Totowa, N.J: Cass ; Biblio Distribution Center, 1977), 69.

<sup>633</sup> Saeed Shehabi, "The Role of Religious Ideology in the Expansionist Policies of Saudi Arabia," in *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (London: C. Hurst, 2008), 186–187.

<sup>634</sup> Yaacov Ro'i, "The Impact of the Islamic Fundamentalist Revival of the Late 1970s on the Soviet View," in *The USSR and the Muslim World : Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 156–157.

<sup>635</sup> Carol Saivetz, "Soviet Perspective on Islam as a Third World Political Force," in *Superpower Involvement in the Middle East : Dynamics of Foreign Policy*, ed. Paul Marantz and Blema Steinberg (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 41.

policy objectives in the third world directly and indirectly,<sup>636</sup> albeit 'on many occasions suppressing Islam as a religion, closing mosques and severely persecuted the clergy.'<sup>637</sup>

Additionally, Moscow took into account that friendly and smooth relations with Muslims inside the USSR Empire might be used as a token of hope and strength, to avoid the criticism of its firm stance against the emergence of pan-Islamist policy in the Middle East promoted by Saudi Arabia at the time. Yet, there is no evidence that Saudi Arabian behavior under King Faisal's leadership amounted to utilizing the Muslim minority card in dealing with the USSR. In fact, Muslims in the USSR had never been a critical asset in the formulation of Saudi policy with Moscow throughout the Cold War. Subsequently, Muslim Soviets became less important in determining Saudi policy toward Moscow because, as Ro'i noticed, "Muslims in the USSR were "Anti-imperialist" not "counter-revolutionary."<sup>638</sup> Perhaps Saudi's leadership perception was keenly underlined by the legitimacy inside the kingdom and cooperation outside, as long as it did not change the business of the survival of the regime. In other words, Faisal's policy orientation as I mentioned before; is staunchly anti-revolutionary, which was inextricably linked to views about Moscow. For Faisal, internal factors and the Saudi state could be used interchangeably due to the highly centralized and personalized rule in the authoritarian state.

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<sup>636</sup> Teresa Rakowska Harmstone, "Soviet Central Asia: A Model of Non- Capitalist Development for the Third World," in *The USSR and the Muslim World: Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 181 ; Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World: 1917-1958* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), 237.

<sup>637</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990), 197.

<sup>638</sup> Ro'i, "The Impact of the Islamic Fundamentalist Revival." (1984), 158.

Moreover, although there was a shift towards Islamizing foreign policy in order to produce a harmonious blend of domestic policy orientation, many promoted Islamic values have been embraced eternally since then. This was, presumably, emphasized in terms of domestic consumption, where Faisal mentioned his Muslim brothers suffering in different parts of the world (non-Arab countries) occurring under a Marxist Atheist state, which had been framed in pan-Islamist policy. Concretely, the emergence of the *āl-Sahwa* movement in Saudi Arabia created and was “a source of a vast social movement that produced its own counterculture and its own organizations and, through the educational system, soon reached almost all the fields of the social arena.”<sup>639</sup> In addition, Saudi Arabia apparently calculated that the political benefits of the religious authority to promote the Saudi foreign policy line, from which the “Wahhabi outreach in the 1950s and 1960s went hand in glove with the Saudi foreign policy initiatives to combat the wave of secular nationalism and communism,”<sup>640</sup> thereby “it had proved to be useful because they exerted considerable influence among the deeply religious population of Central Arabia.”<sup>641</sup>

What emerged at that time, and likely, in response to foreign policy needs, was a positive attitude to the Islamic ideology banner domestically, that might play a role in making the point that Islam could serve a positive function for uniting and rallying for any struggle inside,<sup>642</sup> and that led to pressuring the state from

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<sup>639</sup> Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (2011), 51.

<sup>640</sup> Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (2006), 112.

<sup>641</sup> Guido Steinberg, “The Wahhabi Ulama and the Saudi State: 1745 to The Present,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman (London: Hurst, 2005), 34.

<sup>642</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990), 200.

inside into adopting a more active role for Muslims around the world. The feasibility of this and the influence of state attitude on Islamic ideology is much debated, however, it is not possible to disregard as a contributing factor to the effects on foreign policy. From that time onwards, Wahhabi political theory was based on “the premise that the purpose of government in Islam is to preserve the Shar‘ā and to enforce its dictates has been entrenched in the society,”<sup>643</sup> gained hold among the religious figures during the years of the Cold War and the overarching association with it was the desire to include all Muslims.

In this context then, official Saudi discourse was imbued with Pan-Islamist tones, which at times fed into the derogatory discourse against Arabism and Communism and thereby served to highlight the influence of religion and individual personality on the behavior of the state. Madwai Al-Rasheed wrote in 2008 that, “For decades, officials religious discourse in Saudi Arabia was crucial for the depoliticisation of the population.”<sup>644</sup> In this case, the growth of the Saudi state vision of religion in a globalizing context also encouraged and ‘fostered a global outlook in support of the Muslim *ūmmah* which considered an exaggerated sense of pan-Islamist policy which expressed solidarity with other Muslims worldwide.’<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Muhammed al-Atwneh, “Saudi Arabia: Why the ‘Umma Are Stalling Liberalization,” in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf*, ed. Joshua Teitelbaum (London: Hurst Publishers Ltd, 2009), 94.

<sup>644</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, “The Minaret and the Palace: Obedience at Home and Rebellion Abroad,” in *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia’s Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 204.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 200.



In the mid-1960s, the discourse of Pan-Islamism appeared emphatically, due to state sponsorship, which included description of Communism and nationalism as sources of ignorance, reactionary killing in Arab and Muslim lands, a reflection of the pan-Islamic ideological assumption of the state which consolidated its image as the champion of Islamic causes and thereby absolutely gave Faisal's regime a momentary legitimacy boost.<sup>646</sup>

One of the most hard-hitting criticisms of Soviet policy in the Middle East was articulated by *Jamīl Al-ḥujilān* in his book "al-Dulah and al-thorah. Al-ḥujilān expressed open hostility towards Communism in the Middle East and his views became extremely popular in the mid-1960s, both inside and outside the kingdom. Here, he benefited from his official position in Faisal's government in the 1960s, as the minister of information, and made his arguments in line with the state's official position. In his book, he postulated that 'the bloodshed is Arab and Muslim blood but the reason is a Communist weapon, ... Is not it sad that Communism comes, represented by Russia, from the end of the world to put their red feet on our Arab and Muslim lands.'<sup>647</sup> He lamented that Arabs and Muslims were "the only ones who were victims of Russian influence in the Middle East in order to humiliate Islam and Muslims."<sup>648</sup> Consequently, Saudi society was left with a void of collective tolerance allowing the unrestricted expansion of many religious ideas and controlling decisions rooted in Saudi's policy towards the USSR, in which the 'Umma rose to a position of prominence to achieve the mainstream policy of the state at the time.

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<sup>646</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 30.

<sup>647</sup> Al-ḥujilān, *al-dawlah wa al-thurāh* (1967), 37.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, 74–77.

At the outbreak of the conflict in Yemen in 1962 and onward there were recurrent fears that Saudis had held which emerged during the 1970s and were fuelled in the radical expression of Saudi society, which was unprecedented in the contemporary history of the state. This was partly to reassert Islam in politics, which had become more highly valued by the government, in emphasizing the importance of religion in society as a stable factor. Thus, it led to glossing over the fact that perceptions of religion had been started with distinct characteristics of radicalization, which in the long-term was increasingly institutionalized and became evident in the coming years of the decade. At this point, in the midst of the Cold War, "Saudi Arabia has chosen the *ūmmah*(community) over the Qum (nation.)"<sup>649</sup> This was not surprising, because Aburish summed up the situation thusly, "Muslims were less of a threat to the House of Saud than the awakening Arabs and Saudis, and also because control of Islam's holy shrines gave it a Muslim edge, Faisal pushed his country towards an Islamic identity at the expense of its Arabs."<sup>650</sup>

Several scholars have concluded that Faisal played a role in the dramatic development process in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and early 1960s where the 'Umma's position in society was asserted, which became overwhelmingly loyal to the state.<sup>651</sup> This resulted in concluding that religious factors converge to formulate a justification inside society, perhaps only in the minds of the Faisal regime, which appeared to dominate ideational factors as more important than

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<sup>649</sup> William Ochsenwald, "Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival. " (1981): 277.

<sup>650</sup> Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (1995), 50.

<sup>651</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era*(1988), 22; Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (2011)44–45 ; Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 51.

material factors. Ideational factors tend to have more influence, as they are normally more ingrained within the population and the psyche of the rulers. Hence, causes of foreign policy orientations were directly related to the perceptions of those who made the decisions. Therefore, if pan-Islamism was central to Saudi's imaginings of dealing with Communism then this policy was the desire rather than the cause.

### **Institutionalizing the Islamic organizations practically**

The period of Faisal's rule in Saudi Arabia was the main soil in which Islamic solidarity grew and turned to effective international institutions that reached high levels under Faisal's tenure and beyond.<sup>652</sup> As such, the Islamic diplomacy was Saudi-style, which was active in the Cold War by forming international Islamic organizations.<sup>653</sup> In this light, "Saudi Arabia sought to replace the regional intergovernmental organization that was based on Arab identity with the more religious-oriented Muslim leagues."<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> 'Abas Ghzawi, "'alāqāt Al-Mamlakah Al-'arabīah Al-Su'ūdīah Fī Al-Dwal Islāmīah Wā Dawrāha fī D'am Al-Taḥamīn Al-Islāmī," in *Al-Mamlakah Al-'arabīah Al-Sa'ūdīyah Fī Mi'at 'ām: Buḥūth Wa-Dirāsāt*, vol. 7 (Al-Riyādh: DMA, 2007), 205. Yet, This thesis will solely focus on three main institutions that were constructed during the Cold War and had impacted on the state's foreign policy and there are (IUM-WML- OIC). As for the internal religious and institutions development inside the Kingdom during the Cold War, see for example: Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, (2000); Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, (2007); Niblock, *Saudi Arabia*, (2006) and Yizraeli, *Politics and Society* (2012); AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003).

<sup>653</sup> PRO/FCO, 8/1201, (NBS 18/1 PART A), 'Islamic Diplomacy', 31 October 1968.

<sup>654</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 104.

Within this discourse, Islamic organizations were conceived of as “these non-state actors organizations, particularly through their formal presentation of Islamic issues and standardization of languages and approach, helping to create incipient ideological communities that do not overlap neatly with those of state frontiers. Consequently, it helps within the national and local context of the state.”<sup>655</sup> Dekmejian, in his study on *Islam in revolution: fundamentalism in the Arab world*, found that ‘the dramatic increase of religious buildings in the Arab World and beyond as a result of sources of funding indices as “collective behavior” manifested itself in Islamism during the second half of the 20th century from oil-rich Arab rulers searching for alternatives to socialism and communism.’<sup>656</sup>

In the context of these analyses, Islamic institutions became more important to Saudi Arabia when it felt under threat from hostile powers, “such as revolutionary Arabs who denounced the building of the Islamic organizations and described it as an attempt to recreate the Baghdad Pact.”<sup>657</sup> Accordingly, in strengthening this approach within the political context, it was Faisal’s decision in the 1960s “to open the kingdom to foreign Muslims to develop public institutions, especially in the fields of education and religion.”<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 144.

<sup>656</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, 2nd ed (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 52–53.

<sup>657</sup> PRO/FCO (8/812), ‘*Islamic World League*’, 18 September 1968.

<sup>658</sup> David Commins, “From Wahhabi to Salafi,” in *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, ed. Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 162.

Thus, religious institutions were used as a strategy with which the state could target its stronger adversaries directly. In other words, "Faisal pursued this project and the other components of his strategy in a discrete rather than confrontational fashion."<sup>659</sup> Together this strategy, according to Ayman Al-Yassini "aimed to frame the stated aim of the state by making use of religious values to strengthen its authority legitimacy and policy. It will not hesitate to suppress religious institutions if they challenge its authority."<sup>660</sup> These various Islamic institutions underscore the degree to which Saudi Arabia took advantage of its position as the custodian of the two holy mosques and exploited this geopolitical position in the 1960s to influence its foreign policy.

The structures of Islamic organizations was not only a feature of Saudi Arabia in the Cold War, it also added a substantive Islamic outlet that influenced the foreign policy of the state. Islamic institution building that took place in the 1960s embodied Saudi authority in a tangible form of its renaissance (nahḍah), which appeared as it was undergoing an awakening of restoring Islam.<sup>661</sup> In the Saudi milieu, Islamic institutions are supreme and breathed life into efforts of Saudi Islamic foreign policy, through which the Muslim world received a heavy dose of religious instruction used by the government to advance and challenge positions.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 119; AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, (2003), 104.

<sup>660</sup> Ayman Al-Yassini, "*The Relationship between Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1982), 251.

<sup>661</sup> Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (2010), 84.

<sup>662</sup> Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East*, (1997), 92 ; Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, (2006), 153–154.

Aspects of how the construction of Islamic organizations were consistent with state foreign policy orientation was historically an important subject to Saudi Arabia in all its principles in dealing with the USSR. Hosting both Mecca and Medina sanctuaries, the Saudi Kingdom is the bastion of Islamic creed par excellence.<sup>663</sup> This position infuses a prestige in its inter- Islamic relations, which it has never abstained from exploiting in its foreign policy construction.<sup>664</sup> Increasingly, as from the beginning of the 1960s the Saudi state supported any initiative that might help Muslims anywhere, either by organizing or financing in the kingdom and abroad for the sake of fighting the secular Arab nationalists or the atheist Communists.

A major feature of this period of building the Islamic institutions in the 1960s was 'the notion of Muslims solidarity that linked with Muslim suffering.'<sup>665</sup> The focus on these religious institutions was especially obvious in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, the emphasis on religious identity sought to "spread awareness of the plight of Muslims around the world."<sup>666</sup> In some instances, "these efforts are a substitute for the early expansionist zeal of the Wahhabi movement,"<sup>667</sup> re-appearing to justify different types of Muslim assistance. This was probably best expressed in the writings of Hegghammer. He argued, "International Islamic organizations set up by King Faisal helped foster a third

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<sup>663</sup> PRO/FCO (8/812), *'Islamic World League'*, (1968).

<sup>664</sup> Naveed S. Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy In a World of States* (Richmond: Rutledge Curzon, 2001), 45.

<sup>665</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia (2010)*, 19.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Ochsenwald, "Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival." (1981), 278.

manifestation of pan-Islamism, namely a movement promoting popular assistance to Muslims in need.”<sup>668</sup>

Nevertheless, from the 1960s, a number of religious institutions were established to deal with the national policy of the State to fight Communism and Arab nationalism, whereby it had tremendous repercussions on the civil society of the state itself. Faisal’s conservatism was thus concerned with maximizing the scopes of political Islam that were used with care to achieve its ends.<sup>669</sup> From this vantage point and as of 1962, ‘the government of Saudi Arabia sponsored international Islamic conferences in Mecca to devise ways to fight radicalism, secularism and Communism in the Arab and Muslim worlds whereby religious authorities and distinguished personalities from all over the Muslim world attended the gathering.’<sup>670</sup> Madwai Al-Rasheed remarked “ Faisal’s popularity in the Islamic world reached a level never granted to previous Saudi kings.”<sup>671</sup> The political environment under which Islamic originations developed gives us a great deal of insight into their nature. In other words, the constructions of these religious institutions should be understood in the context of the Cold War, as anti- imperialist and anti-Communist ends.<sup>672</sup>

However, the establishment of religious institutions gave Saudi Arabia a high platform and facilitated its notion of fighting Communism. This was a gradual rise after the Arab defeat of 1967 where the plan for rapprochement between all

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<sup>668</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 18.

<sup>669</sup> PRO/FCO (8/812), ‘*Islamic World League*’, (1968).

<sup>670</sup> Ibid. ; Sindi, “King Faisal and Pan- Islamism.” (1980), 186.

<sup>671</sup> Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (2010), 128.

<sup>672</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 386.

the Islamic states had a new base at the expense of the former Arab nationalist ideology.<sup>673</sup> Importantly, to encourage such an idea of Muslim solidarity and increase the weight of Islam, Saudi Arabia used a new approach of finding concrete enemies and these were, globally the USSR and regionally Israel.<sup>674</sup> To this end, this policy took more dimensions in the course of the mid-1960s and “were characterized by greater Saudi involvement in international political struggles pitting Muslims versus non-Muslims.”<sup>675</sup>

Saudi Arabia at that time relied heavily on experience and renegades of some secular Arab states such as Egypt and Syria to implement the building of Islamic centers and institutions in secular, leftist- torn regions. Yet, “the state allowed the ‘ulema to administer and control the dissemination of religious knowledge by foreign instructors to ensure that the latter did not promote any religio-political interpretations that could threaten the discourse of consent or introduce religious innovations.”<sup>676</sup> In correlation, ‘even though there were similar thoughts expressed by other institutions and organizations and most importantly leaders in several parts of the Muslim countries,’<sup>677</sup> Saudi King, Faisal, viewed himself as being a facilitator of this policy, as he used it to emphasize his commitment to Islamic unity, as discussed previously.

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid.,387.

<sup>675</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, (2010), 21.

<sup>676</sup> Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State* (2006),63.

<sup>677</sup> Nizar Madani, “The Islamic Content of the Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia.”, (1977), 88.



It is thus important to underscore here that religious institutions did not seek to defeat the Communist threat throughout the Cold War directly; rather they were a political strategy that obtained success simply by mobilizing and encouraging public opinion in targeting more Communist elements, along with Arab leftists, in Muslim societies. This was followed by Saudi's efforts to compel various Arab states to abandon Arab nationalism in order to halt the spread of Communism and subsequently allowed the Islamic alliance to offer considerable inducements to Muslims and Arabs.<sup>678</sup> In this vein, building Islamic institutions could be especially effective because it did not involve formal agreements between governments but simply use soft power acting to pursue the policy of the state.

Hence, to counterattack the ideology of nationalism and Communism internally and externally, three main insinuations emerged to achieve this task. 'One was the Islamic University of Medina (IUM), established in 1961 as a competitor to al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Muslim World league established in 1962.'<sup>679</sup> Additionally, as al-Saif stated "this period witnessed a noticeable increase in the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood with new affiliates from the Saudi religious establishment increasing its membership. The latter would subsequently occupy high-ranking posts as administrators in a number of prominent religious establishments funded by the state, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, the

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<sup>678</sup> S.G Sūaleh and L Shāmbūn.u, review of *al-syāsah al-khārjīah al-mamlakah al-‘arabīyah al-su‘ūdīyah*, by ‘Abd Allāh al-alsh‘l, *Markz Drāsāt Al-Khaleej Wa Al-Jazīrah Al-‘arabīah* 4, no. 15 (1978): 119.

<sup>679</sup> Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (2011), 41–42.

Ministry of Defense, universities.”<sup>680</sup> In this period then, Mike Farquhar’s writing about IUM is also instrumental as an explanation for Saudi activities in combating the Soviet threat. He mentioned that “IUM is a project in 1961 backed by the Saudi State for mostly non-Saudi male students to preach to them and also (non-Muslims) around the world which are seen as having strayed from true creed.”<sup>681</sup> Farquhar continued to make an interesting comment about the role of IUM on the practice of state policy in the Cold War. He stated, “One of the main goals of IUM is to serve an important foreign policy purpose whereby it can promote conservative religious thinking amongst Muslim communities abroad, and it could arguably help to ameliorate a threatening regional and also global environment that were gaining ground.”<sup>682</sup> This notion reflects Saudi’s policy in finding and ways and means whereby the state can fight the threats that Saudis faced, rather than simply relying on one specific method for combating Communism or nationalism; it could employ a range of ‘soft and hard’ approaches.

The second institution was Rabṭat al ‘alm al-islāmī or (World Muslim League) (WML) with a permanent headquarters in Mecca in 1962. Its secretary-general is the former Minister of Finance, Muhammed Surur al-Sabban.<sup>683</sup> Even though “the

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<sup>680</sup> Tawfiq al-Saif, “Political Islam in Saudi Arabia: Recent Trends and Future Prospects,” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 7, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 406, doi:10.1080/17550912.2014.936122.

<sup>681</sup> Mike Farquhar, “The Islamic University of Medina since 1961: The Politics of Religious Mission and the Making of a Modern Salafi Pedagogy,” in *Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role of Al-Azhar, Al-Medina, and Al-Mustafa*, ed. Masooda Bano and Keiko Sakurai (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 21.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>683</sup> PRO/FCO (8/812), ‘*Islamic World League*’, (1968).

WML was not formed as a political or a governmental organization, but rather a religious organization whose objectives include the dissemination of all alien ideologies and habits inconsistent with Islam.”<sup>684</sup> Meanwhile, in the years following its establishment the WML became the non-official spokesperson of Saudi Arabia in the Islamic world, ‘with some moral authority to counterbalance Cairo’s Arab leadership.’<sup>685</sup>

To that effect, this step was a diplomatic offensive to promote Arab solidarity through a narrow perspective, not from Arab revolutionary confines, who looked at Moscow as the champion of their ideology, but through the broader perspective of Muslim solidarity.<sup>686</sup> In this way, Saudi Arabia avoided political and ideological encirclement by going on the political and ideological offensive, whereby more conservative states supported the (WML) initiative.<sup>687</sup> According to Hegghammer, “WML became involved in a vast range of cultural, educational and charitable activities and served as the umbrella organization for a plethora of smaller organizations.”<sup>688</sup> The British embassy reported that “the Saudi Arabian government’s annual budget for the (WML) has increased between 1966-1968 from 19 to 30 Million Saudi riyals, which makes this Islamic diplomacy unlikely to die out at any early date.”<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> Sindi, “King Faisal and Pan- Islamism.” (1980),186.

<sup>685</sup> Barradah, “Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Policy.”(1989), 236; PRO/FCO (8/812), ‘*Islamic World League*’.

<sup>686</sup> Hafiz, “Changes in Saudi Foreign Policy Behavior 1964-1975.”(1980)” 55.

<sup>687</sup> James Piscatori, “Islamic Values and National Interest: The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia,” in *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. Adeed Dawisha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 41.

<sup>688</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 19.

<sup>689</sup> PRO/FCO (8/812), ‘*Islamic World League*’, (1968).

Moreover, making a step in the development of Islamic organizations, (Munẓẓamat al-mū'tamar al-islāmā ) the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) established in 1969, which contributed to enhance the creation of Pan- Islamic policy. The OIC also placed Islam as the linchpin through the Cold War, as it was 'an intergovernmental organization with greater influence in the diplomatic sphere and had the power to set up financial institutions and charities.'<sup>690</sup> Parallel to WML, "OIC provided a permanent institution through which the Saudis could express their views and emphasize their role in the Islamic World, therefore strengthening their position among the Arabs."<sup>691</sup> Thus, in many cases, the research and development carried out by these organizations above has been directly funded by the government and correspondingly, they often measure their success in relation to government policy. Therefore, "these Islamic institutions have been essentially non-state actors unfettered by realpolitik which pressured the Saudi State into extending more support for Muslim causes around the world."<sup>692</sup>

This period thus saw the process of "contingent political and pragmatic considerations"<sup>693</sup> where the state overrated the danger of the Soviet communist threat along with Arab nationalism that helped in recognizing the importance of the extent of the Islamic alliance. However, developing and raising concerns for Arabs and Muslims the Egyptian president Nasser "derided Faisal's Islamic

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<sup>690</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>691</sup> Piscatori, "Islamic Values and National Interest." (1983), 41.

<sup>692</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 18.

<sup>693</sup> Farquhar, "The Islamic University of Medina since 1961." (2015) 36.

alliance as a tool of imperialism.”<sup>694</sup> The Egyptian historian Moḥammed Hikeel has contended constantly, though, that ‘the US facilitated the building of the Islamic doctrine and institutions during the Cold War which shaped appropriate and feasible action needed to ally Muslims and isolate the Soviet Union.’<sup>695</sup>

This point has repeatedly been stressed by another Arabian (American) author Rashid Khalidi, who referred to the foreign policy of the United States in the mid-1960s, where ‘Washington used Islam as an important part of its foreign policy in the Cold War in the Middle East against the Soviets, which was a useful proxy to fight the USSR given the collective commitment from the Saudis and Americans towards Moscow.’<sup>696</sup> Nevertheless, it has to be noted that the ability of Saudi Arabia to completely refute any accusations of expansionism or neo-colonialism, with reference to its history, undoubtedly gives it additional legitimacy to pursue the Islamic policy choice against the Communist threat.<sup>697</sup>

However, while Saudi officials and religious figures rarely mentioned the relationship between Muslim political organizations and Saudi national interests, they did not emphasize this as a primary justification for Saudi involvement

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<sup>694</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 121.

<sup>695</sup> Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World* (London: Collins, 1978), 85–90.

<sup>696</sup> Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis* (2009), 19–20.

<sup>697</sup> This notion that, ‘Saudi Arabia did not have a legacy of colonial power’ has regularly been employed by Saudi leaders and supporters. Accordingly, it has not been absent from all local and external crises in the history of Saudi Arabia and hence has been fairly powerful. Moreover, when I asked one former and senior Saudi employee at WML whether creating all of these Islamic institutions in the Cold War was related with the U.S. foreign policy in fighting Communism, he answered almost surprised, “Not even supported ... But the U.S. government greatly admired that.” Interview Jeddah, January 2014.

against radicalism and Leftists. Indeed, 'Saudi national interest,' either direct or indirect, was regularly evoked by the state as a means of garnering public support or to validate the adoption of Islamic organizations in fighting against secularism, socialism and Communism. It can be argued that this represents self-interest to some extent, by increasing Saudi profile worldwide and gaining access to more powerful Islamic states with vested interests in the regions concerned. Apart from being a state policy, 'Faisal was also motivated in institutional development to serve Islam's conception of the world as developed in the early period during which the Islamic theory of international relations began to take form.'<sup>698</sup> This theory of international relations is "to be found neither in the Qur'an nor in the Prophet Muḥammed's utterances, although its basic assumptions were derived from these authoritative sources."<sup>699</sup>

In essence, the most significant consequence of this concept was seen as "a defensive buffer against the spread of left-wing socialist and communist ideas thereby creating issues that revolved around the preservation of religious identity, directing distrust towards the outside world and exaggerating the alleged global conspiracy and cultural invasion as a lever to promote the state ideology."<sup>700</sup> Therefore, "Traditional Islamic political theory maintains that religion and state are indivisible."<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> Madani, "The Islamic Content ." (1977), 95.

<sup>699</sup> Majid Khadduri, "The Islamic Theory of International Relations," in *Islam and International Relations*, ed. Harris Proctor (London: Pall Mall Press, 1995), 29.

<sup>700</sup> al-Saif, "Political Islam in Saudi Arabia." (2014), 417.

<sup>701</sup> Al-Yassini, "The Relationship between Religion." (1982), 249.

## Conclusions

Dealing with Communism during the Cold War shaped the Islamic view of Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the 20th century and deeply affected its society and peoples. By providing a justification for the rejection of the USSR's influence regional and globally this helped the regime to take unprecedented steps in prompting religion and maintaining the grip of the Communist threat.

In doing so, this process led Saudi policy to tilt toward Islamic assertion of leadership in the Middle East. By the same token, the emergence of the pan Islamism policy coincided perfectly with the beginning of elements of radicalization in Saudi society, resulting in the introduction of fundamental ideas for Saudis, leading to the unleash of waves of hatred against any Islamic ideology that viewed the role of Islam differently from them. This was largely driven by the state-sponsored expansion of religion and its institutions to support national oriented state policy against Communism.

In a larger sense, Saudi Arabia in the midst of the Cold War saw Communism as a monster that sought to destroy Islam on such an enormous scale that it should be met with repression by the state internally and externally, either by state or non-state actors. Perhaps, this is a hint of the foreign policy dilemma in Saudi Arabia throughout the Cold War, which required choosing between Western values (mainly the U.S.) and Islamic traditions or the possible adoption of the two.

## Chapter 6

### - The Identical Ideologies: Zionism emerged from Communism

The Arab-Soviet relationship with the Palestinian conflict was the main constraint of Saudi's strategic calculus against Moscow. Since Faisal ascended to power as King in 1964 and before that as the de facto ruler since 1962, the Palestinian plight was inextricably linked in his mind to the rise of Zionism-Communism in the Muslim World. Hence, any discussion or conjecture about finding a solution to this issue should have begun by correcting Muslims' understanding of communism, which presented to Zionism a very significant role in the conflict. As important is a discussion of 'the two sides of the same coin' which seems significant in this work to realize that the argument that 'the worst of the two worlds' dictated the Saudi view of fighting Zionism under the pretext of Communism. Yet, the rest of the Arab World thought Moscow was an ally of Arabs against Israel, which led them to have a sense of cynicism and mistrust about Saudi politics in the conflict in the Arab World. Together in this scene the challenge provoked considerable debate, in particular regarding the war in 1967 and its repercussions, which led me to examine the machinery that had been established by the Saudis in fighting the axis of communism - Zionism in the Cold War and assess whether this was a strategy of serving his country's interests or a genuine solution to the Palestinian problem.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> In this chapter, I refrain from discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict 1956, 67 and 73 in more detail. Rather, I will firstly engage in an earlier discourse that was promoted by Saudi Arabia under Faisal himself, which associated the Palestinian tragedy with Communism. Then I will engage selectively with a small subset of these wars and within the debate regarding Moscow's engagement on the Arab side and its implications for Faisal's approach to Moscow until the oil embargo of 1973 and beyond.



### **The other side of the coin**

The kaleidoscope nature of Saudi's vision of communism soon showed itself in the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. For Saudis, the world at large, the creation or re-establishment of the Palestinian state had meant primarily eradicating communist expansion in the Arab World, which would eliminate the regeneration of other ideologies, such as Zionism <sup>703</sup> or Arabism. In essence, the changing terms of threats attested to receiving internal rather than regional recognition. According to Gerges' findings, "Given the centrality of the Palestine cause to the Arab people, it had become a legitimizing symbol in Arab politics and a rallying cry for Arab rulers drumming up political support for their precarious regimes."<sup>704</sup>

In the Cold War and from the Saudi perspective, "Israel was largely responsible for the collapse of the old order and the entry of the Soviet Union into the region."<sup>705</sup> Therefore, "It was Israel's ability in 1948 to defeat the conservative

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<sup>703</sup> Zionism (or Zionist establishment or Zionist entity) principally means in the eyes of Arabs the creation of Israel in 1948 on territory regarded as sacred Arab land. Yet, its usage in the struggle between Israel and Palestine has negative connotations in the Arab World thus far; but also it had a certain paradigm as the basis of its use in the period of the Cold War. In Faisal's sense, Zionism is offensive to all Arabs and further to all Islamic peoples, as the final goal of Zionism (in his view) was to seize not only Palestine but also Mecca and Medina. Therefore, Faisal's view of it was narrower than other Arab leaders at the time. So trying to link both of these ideologies served as a masterstroke of diplomacy when he tried to eliminate Communism and Zionist Israel. A decade later, his tone towards Israel was more fundamentalist, as a British document revealed that, "Faisal too is deeply opposed to the existence of Israel as an independent state." See: PRO, FCO 8/808, (BS 2/4), '*Saudi Arabia during and after the Arab-Israeli War*', 17 July 1967.

<sup>704</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 191.

<sup>705</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 30.

governments of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan that set off a wave of military coups in the Arab World that were friendly to Moscow.”<sup>706</sup> As argued in the introduction, the main theme was to start fighting communism; as a major threat to Saudi Arabia and the Arab World, which led to the creation of the Zionist state of Israel.

Interestingly, King Faisal’s enmity towards communism, as AbuKhalil noted “characterized his aggressive foreign policy towards ‘Judaism’ not just to ‘Zionism as a political movement.’”<sup>707</sup> By contrast, Long contended that “Faisal always claimed to distinguish between religious Judaism, which he recognized as one of the Peoples of the Book, and Zionism which he castigated as a secular political doctrine.”<sup>708</sup> In a WikiLeaks memo, it stated that: “Faisal’s views about Jews are more moderate and forthcoming than we have ever heard. Age-old Arab-Jewish friendship, to the fact that the Jews fled from Christian Spain into Arab North Africa, not to Christian Europe. All the current problems and difficulties rose from the establishment of Zionism.”<sup>709</sup> Thus, one can say that Faisal’s hardline approach towards Israel after 1967 by openly questioning its

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia Power* (2003), 99.

<sup>708</sup> Long, “King Faisal World View” (1982), 179. Here also, Long and Maisel state that ‘Saudi opposition to Israel, in particular to Faisal’s time, has been fueled as much by a religious issue as by a secular political issue.’

See: Long and Maisel, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2010), 159.

<sup>709</sup> Wikileaks, US Embassy Jeddah. 1975. “*King Faisal and the Jews.*” Wikileaks Cable: 1975JIDDA00660\_b At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA00660\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA00660_b.html). (Accessed 15 July 2016).

policy in the Arab World became a major source of irritation regarding a Zionist-communist conspiracy.<sup>710</sup>

Not surprisingly, in order to react strongly to the Palestinian crisis, the main problem was soon framed in the Arab World's relationship with Moscow as one of the many reasons that allowed this occupation to flourish prior to 1967. This somewhat reinforced the king antipathy to Israel post-1967 on political and strategic grounds, which made few scholars fail in understanding his distinction between Judaism and Zionism.<sup>711</sup> The veteran Russian historian Alexei Vassiliev was perhaps among the first if not the first, to write about Faisal's attitude to the Jews in general and the Zionist establishment of the state of Israel. He was careful to retain confusion between his antagonism to the Israeli state and Judaism. In his analysis, he concluded "that he was against the Zionist doctrine, but not against Jews, against Communism but not Russia."<sup>712</sup>

Arguably, these views reflected a 'powerful expression and attitude' of Saudi Arabia towards the defenseless Palestinians against the Zionist entity. Thereby, a policy of personal denunciations of Israeli policy and its leaders had different interpretations, which King Faisal took as a token of hope and strength against

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<sup>710</sup> The horizon of the word "conspiracy" in Arabians minds still prevails, which reflects the repeatedly stressed idea that few Arabs are conspiracy theorists. However, the notion is that that Faisal firmly subscribed to the conspiracy theory, which held that recent Arab history had been manipulated by foreign forces hostile to Arab interests, beginning with the Sykes-Picot agreement and Balfour's promise and ending with the enormous assistance rendered by the US to create and arm Israel. See for example: Vassiliev, *King Faisal* (2012), 338; Lacey, *The Kingdom* (1982), 386-387.

<sup>711</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 31.

<sup>712</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal* (2012), 335-340.

the two sides of the same coin. This had a negative impact on the ability of his critics to understand his policy regarding all Jews and Israeli foreign policy since 1967, clouding their judgments of his view of Judaism in general.

Significantly, contextualizing the adverse role of the creation of Israel and the subsequent wars went in line with Saudi's policy in the struggle against communism having repeatedly labeled communism as being against god and an anathema to Islam. Similarly, Saudi Arabia painted a negative overall image of the Zionist movement which created Israel, and compared it equally with communism by pointing out the ignorance and moral decadency of both, which contrasted unfavorably with Islamic principles.<sup>713</sup> Even when King Faisal met with the American President Eisenhower he urged the US to "take note of the threat that Zionism and Communism posed to peace in the Middle East and even to stability and integrity of US society itself."<sup>714</sup>

Consequently, these two ideologies were massively destabilizing messages that created a need to be rejected within the framework of Islam. Therefore, Islamic policy was part of the solution as always, in addition to which exposing to the world the collusion between the creation of the Zionist project of Israel and

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<sup>713</sup> Note that the notion of Jihad against Zionism was not absent from Faisal's political doctrine in the 1960s, however. A British diplomat mentioned "Faisal addressed a widely rallied excited crowd in Riyadh with a strident call to all Muslims to wage 'Jihad' against Zionism." See: PRO, FCO 8/808 (BS 2/4), 'Saudi Arabia during and after Arab-Israeli War'.

<sup>714</sup> Wikileaks Department of State Washington. 1973. " *King Faisal Calls For Early Solution to Arab- Israeli Problem.*" Wikileaks Cable: 1973STATE078404\_b. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973STATE078404\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973STATE078404_b.html). (Accessed 8 June 2016).

Moscow in the Middle East, looking with favor to Palestine as the victim of this imaginary alliance.

From this point on, in the second half of the 1950s, Saudi Arabia took the Zionist-communist conspiracy to its most extreme in the Cold War. King Faisal went beyond the contention that Zionism and communism were two sides of the same coin, but he further asserted that “the Soviet Union did not support Arabs but pretended to back Arab states, which is all part of a grand conspiracy of communism, which is a Zionist creation designed to fulfill the aims of communism. They are only pretending to work against each other.”<sup>715</sup> Overlapping the Zionist movement and communism had the potential to make a significant impact on the regional policy by countering these evil ideologies “that afflict the Muslim World.”<sup>716</sup>

With this strict view, King Faisal seemed to “wrong-foot his pro-Soviet Arab competitors and to please his Western backers, equating Zionism and communism.”<sup>717</sup> From such a perspective, the notion that Zionism and communism were working in parallel to undermine the civilized world, leaving aside the Muslim world was his brainchild. Henry Kissinger wrote, “it was hard to know here how to begin in answering such a line of reasoning. But Faisal insisted that an end had to be put once and for all to the dual conspiracy of

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<sup>715</sup> Gerald Posner, *Secrets of the Kingdom: The Inside Story of the Saudi- U.S. Connection* (New York: Random House, 2005), 45.

<sup>716</sup> Al-ḥujilān, *Al-Dawlah* (1967), 77.

<sup>717</sup> Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption* (1995), 133.

Zionism and communism.”<sup>718</sup> In one important respect, Faisal inadvertently looked at Zionism and communism as two sides of the same coin and wanted to address both issues simultaneously to serve his purpose. Kissinger argued, “The strident anti-communism helped reassure America and established a claim on protection against outside threats (all armed by the Soviet Union). The virulent opposition to Zionism reassured radicals and the PLO and thus reduced their incentive to follow any temptation to undermine the monarchy domestically, which resulted in embracing Islam in an unexpected way.”<sup>719</sup>

Thus, “its thrust was vague enough to imply no precise consequences; it dictated few policy options save a general anti- communism.”<sup>720</sup> As such, the concept of ‘encirclement syndrome’ is applicable to his understanding of communism and Zionism during the Cold War. On the Saudi side, as Long observed, “the long-standing Saudi encirclement syndrome has played a major role in evaluation of modern Saudi foreign policy and the search for national security.”<sup>721</sup> King Faisal had intertwined the frames of communist strategy and Zionism in many ways within his speeches and leaflets. This was reflected in a speech in which he said: “We are offended and displeased by some evil powers such as communism and Zionism... we should not be deceived by these evil ideologies ... I am absolutely sure that Muslims will. ...uphold their religion and... cooperate in righteousness and piety.”<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (1982), 661.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid., 662.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Long and Maisel, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2010), 145–146.

<sup>722</sup> Long, “King Faisal World View.” (1982), 180.

This expressed the recognition that his linkage of these two ideologies would lead to loss of Islamic identity and the final defeat for Muslims in his view. Accordingly, in his credo, the terms communism and Zionism were infused by the feeling of a zero-sum game with which he aimed to increase fear among Muslims and encourage actions against these superficial ideologies. Consequently, this linkage of Zionism and communism was warranted and sound. Ideological and philosophical differences of one's enemies did not change their inimical attitudes towards him. "Even if communism and Zionism are two different ideologies, their common end, destruction of the religion of Islam, unites them in a single purpose."<sup>723</sup>

Hence in the 1950s, Al-Osaimi noticed, "Faisal played the role of preacher. His patterns of advocacy were religious and political in nature, although the political dimensions were suppressed and more often overshadowed by religious tones."<sup>724</sup> This was part of Saudi's strategy to unite in 'fighting Zionism and communism throughout the world, for they are, in Saudi's view, plotting together to subjugate Muslims and uproot their religion.'<sup>725</sup>

Robert Lacey interviewed Faisal and explained his view of the axis of communism and Zionism. He analyzed Faisal's view by saying 'Faisal thinks the USSR and Israel are all part of a great plot.... Communism is a Zionist creation designed to fulfill the aims of Zionism.... They are only pretending to work

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<sup>723</sup> Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 95.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

against each other.<sup>726</sup> This conviction dominated the Saudi project in the Cold War with increasing inclination towards the basis of Saudi's foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Later, King Faisal often argued, "there were few Arab communists or socialists before Israel's creation. But the wound to Arab dignity that Israel represented had helped to generate revolutionary-communist thinking in the Middle East, to the detriment of God-fearing countries like Saudi Arabia."<sup>727</sup>

Thanks to Zionism, Riyadh found itself threatened both by the Israelis and by the aggrieved Arab radicals backed by Moscow with their irreligious policies and Faisal had no hesitation in linking the two.<sup>728</sup> The distinguishing feature of this equation was thus envisaged at the core level of Saudi's ideology, which eradicated communism in the Middle East and confronted it fiercely, whereupon the Zionist regime of Israel would fall at once. Needless to say, the correlation between them helped the Saudis to incorporate these circumstantial factors in the Cold War, helped the state to symbolize its own ideas of the danger of communism-Zionism, ultimately encompassing the regional and global objectives. This was unique not only in the way that the Saudi state managed to intertwine communism with the Zionism impetus, but it also provided the basis for significant political selectiveness in fighting communism.

Likewise, Zionism occupies a dominant place in the political history of the Cold War in Saudi Arabia, because it was the main cause for which communism was

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<sup>726</sup> Lacey, *The Kingdom* (1982), 386; Vassiliev, *King Faisal* (2012), 338;

<sup>727</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal* (2012), 338.

<sup>728</sup> Lacey, *The Kingdom* (1982), 386



formulated in the Arab World. Thus, in order to draw an analogy between Zionism and communism as the single problem in the Muslim World, Muḥammed 'Abd- al-Qanī, a professor of Political Geography at Cairo University, wrote one of the leading articles about the implications of the creation of Israel and the Soviet Union.

'Abd- al-Qanī, argued that the rising conflict of Israel and Palestine was the defining factor in "Moscow's consolidation of its power in the Cold War."<sup>729</sup> Moscow had faced various difficulties with helping Arabs against Israeli aggression, in which it did not appear as a hero of the Arab nations. Accordingly, there is 'evidence to further prove the notion that the creation of the Zionist nation of Israel was also an important factor of communist's interest in the Arab World.'<sup>730</sup> Amīn mḥmūd was also very explicit in linking Zionism with communism. He thus equated the creation of Israel with the rise and the prominence of the devil incarnate of Soviet power in the Arab World. According to him, "the Zionist movement has creed as a sinister carrier of a communist plague, which somehow led to form the nucleus of the Marxist-Communist cells that were able to build a strong Soviet status in the region and enabled Moscow to expand its ambitions at the expense of the Palestinian tragedy."<sup>731</sup>

With this approach, Al-Ziriklī offered to the Arabs in the Cold War a conceptualist explanation of the relationship between Zionism and communism. He asserted

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<sup>729</sup> Moḥammed 'Abd al-Qanī, "Al-Khalīj Bayna Muqawimāt Al-Waḥdeh Wa širā Al-Quwā Al-Uzmā," *Dirāsāt Al-Khalīj Wa Al-Jazīrah Al-'Arabīyah* 20, no. 5 (1979): 39.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>731</sup> Amīn mḥmūd, *Al-Ittiḥād Al-Swfitī Wa Ta'asīs Dawlah īsrā'īl* (al-Qāhirah: "Ein li- al-dirāsāt wa al-buḥth al-insānīah al-ijtimā'īyah, 2013), 88-89.

that “the USSR was a threat to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia because of the ‘firm relations’ between communism and Zionism and because of the Orthodox Church’s Russian propaganda; therefore we oppose Zionism and Communism and hold that the Orthodox Church should not be permitted to become a tool of Moscow and Zionist propaganda in the Arab-Muslim countries.”<sup>732</sup> Equating communism with Israel’s Zionism, Ajami criticized a few conservative’ Arab-Islamic writers, who were adapting their narratives to the same line of Saudi government policy during the Cold War, with which they conceived their objectives. He further asserted that these writers were acting like publicists and perceived that “the Soviet Union as world is Manichean, conspiratorial, a battleground for the forces of good and evil. And in that world, the Soviet Union’s Communism and Israel’s Zionism are the twin evils.”<sup>733</sup> Increasingly, this link between communism and Zionism painted a grim picture to the extent that it was far ahead in terms of strength but behind in terms of morality.<sup>734</sup>

Meanwhile, the question of Zionism-Communism continued to be a constant source of aggravation for Saudi Arabia and Egypt’s Nasser. What was especially distinctive about the Zionism-Communism account was the implicit accusations

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<sup>732</sup> Khayr al-Dīn Al-Ziriklī, *Shibh Al-Jazīrah Fī’ahd Al-Malik “Abd Al-”Azīz*, vols. 4 (Bayrūt: Maṭābl Dār al-Qalam, 1970), 773–775.

<sup>733</sup> Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (1981), 67.

<sup>734</sup> For more on the historical contribution of Saudi Arabia to the collective identity of historians spanning across religious, regional and clan-based solidarities and how the emergence of these historians was largely driven by the state-financed expansion of education during the 1960s and 70s to legitimize the nation state, see the thoughtful analysis of the chapter “Asserting Towns, trips and the Shiites in the national History, 1970s to present”, in: Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia* (2012), 139–175.

of Riyadh and Egypt that the emphasis they placed that one another served the Zionist agenda or more explicitly the state of Israel.

Indeed, 'the injection of the problem of Palestine into the Arab body has always been sufficient to drug it into monomania. Over the following years, Saudi's criticism started increasing sharpness on Arab revolutionary strategy, socialism and communism, with Nasser receiving a major part of the blame.'<sup>735</sup> This indicates firstly, the Palestinian issue has been used and abused by many Arab leaders to advance their political agendas in the Arab World. Second, the Palestinian issue was an integral component of attempts in the Cold War between Riyadh and Cairo to legitimize their political campaigns against each other either with the West or on the Soviet side.<sup>736</sup>

In other words, in both cases, both Saudi Arabia and Egypt were struggling to define their relationships with the main superpowers to reaffirm a long-standing support of Palestine as symbolic of justifying their aims. Kazziha's analysis of the Palestine cause led him to believe that "the importance of the Palestine question, whether viewed in the context of the evolution of radical regimes, as a factor in inter-Arab political conflicts, or as an issue in the relationship with the

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<sup>735</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808, (BS 12/1), 'Further criticism of Arab Oil Policy in Saudi Arabian press and Broadcasting Service', 17 July 1967.

<sup>736</sup> For more on the mutual accusations between Faisal and Nasser about their role in serving Zionist movements, see: Adeed Dawisha, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: *The Ups and Downs of Pragmatic Moderation*," *International Journal* 38, no. 4 (1983): 675–677, doi:10.2307/40202206. ; Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 346–358. For more from Arabic literature of the accusation: see: 'Abd al-Qanī, "Al-Khalīj Bayna Muqawimāt Al-Waḥdeh Wa širā Al-Quwā Al-Uḏmā," (1979), 50–66; Al-ḥujilān, *Al-Dawlah* (1967), 77.

superpowers, is the simple fact that since 1948 Palestine has become a legitimizing resources for Arab governments.”<sup>737</sup>

For these and other reasons, ‘the Palestine questions became entangled in the Arab Cold War with devastating consequences for the security of the Arab order.’<sup>738</sup> Furthermore, “the increasing importance of Israel in regional politics affected Arab states’ relationships with the great powers by reducing their capacity to resist and stand up to the latter.”<sup>739</sup> This interplay of Cold War policy posed the biggest challenge for Saudi regime and made it impossible to ignore Soviet assistance to Arabs against Israel.

Hence, Saudi Arabia again found itself caught between the need to fight communism and the need to satisfy popular demands regarding the Palestine issue. As such, this was certainly an example of the extent to which the Palestinian-Israeli struggle permeated Saudi attitudes towards communism and presented a subject for popular discussion among intellectual Saudis. From this angle, official emphasis on the Palestinian issue had another dimension that can help in the political homogeneity of the kingdom, feeding into the context of the Cold War struggle against Zionism-Communism.

Consequently, ‘the Islamization of the Palestinian cause and struggle against the Zionist created state of Israel indirectly facilitated a religious line of struggle of

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<sup>737</sup> Walid Kazziha, “The Impact of Palestine On Arab Politics,” in *The Politics of Arab Integration*, ed. Giacomo Luciani and Ghassan Salama (New York: Croom Helm, 1988), 219.

<sup>738</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 164.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

this issue and communism in order for Saudi's regime to link and undermine both of them, along with the growing role of the leftist, Arab radicalism.' <sup>740</sup> Saudi's opposition to Zionism was not enough to ensure his country wholeheartedly supported the Palestinians. As we will notice later in the coming subsection, before 1967, in fact, the Saudis had not been closely involved with the Palestinian movement. "In part this was because the Palestinian activists of the day were typically either leftists or followers of Egypt's Nasser, who was ultimately ambitious and a vehicle for communist infiltration."<sup>741</sup> Yet, on the basis of these considerations post-1967 saw a tremendous change in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus Faisal's regime had unleashed his overlap vision to spell out for Arabs the justifications for restraining Communism- Zionism in the Palestinian struggle; how did this mechanism work? This, it will be defined in the next section.

#### **Withering Soviet effectiveness in the Israeli-Palestinian Conundrum since 1967:**

Moscow's assistance for Arabs against Israel during the Cold War has been a complex subject to comprehend. What cannot be denied is that the Soviet Union played a role in the 1967 conflict under the banner of backing the Arab revolutionary states, the foremost of which was Nasser of Egypt, 'which was a

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<sup>740</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 99.

<sup>741</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 32; PREM, FCO 11/1122 (*Confidential From Jeddah to Foreign Office/4*), 'Addressed to Foreign Office Telegram No 318 of October 1", 1 October 1956.

major incentive in Arab-Soviet relations.’<sup>742</sup> This being said, however, Moscow’s interest in the conflict has also been open to discussion, albeit its involvement in the conflict throughout the Cold War was an extremely delicate issue for them.

Despite the manifold writings on the Arab-Israeli struggle over the Palestinian issue, Moscow’s role in the conflict throughout the Cold War has been obscure ever since. Golan stressed the importance of the Arab-Israeli war for “the prestige of Moscow in the Arab World.”<sup>743</sup> She postulated that “the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict has served Soviet interest in the Middle East.”<sup>744</sup> In that sense, Gerges’ argument holds considerable merit. Indeed, he argued that ‘Soviet leaders with the May crisis found themselves in an unenviable position. Even they were aware of the deep divisions within the Arab World and Israeli military superiority. The Kremlin leaders were also against war in the Middle East that might involve them in a direct clash with the U.S.’<sup>745</sup>

The foregoing analysis illustrates that Moscow’s concern in the conflict during the Cold War was to serve regional needs that were certainly not lost on Moscow, which was able to perform many of its functions more nimbly and with less complaint. While the Soviet Union has displayed markedly fewer pro-Israeli tendencies than the U.S. and the West, this pro-Arab orientation did not motivate Saudi Arabia towards a conciliatory style vis-à-vis Moscow.

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<sup>742</sup> Rashid Khalidi, “The Gulf and Palestine in Soviet Policy,” in *Palestine and The Gulf*, ed. Rashid Khalidi and Camille Mansour (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1982), 191.

<sup>743</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990), 95.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 216.

Moreover, the lack of Soviet leverage over Israel in the wars, signified few assumptions of suspicions about the Soviet's positive role in the Middle East conflict. The aforementioned constitutes the tendency of many Saudi and Arab researchers to describe Moscow's role in the conflict as (deceptive and treacherous) uncritically.<sup>746</sup>

An important element of fathoming Saudi's policy with Moscow was the perception of the Soviet Union's negative role during the Arab- Israeli conflict; and the development of the Saudi dissatisfaction in this regard since 1967. The notion of Moscow (the backer of Arabs) in the wars did not resonate deeply with Saudis and if this happened, it was not because of the brown eyes of Arabs but at least some gain for Soviet policy against the American successes in the Middle East. Following this line of thinking, Saudi Arabia had to galvanize the Arab population throughout the region to support Palestinians; this was followed by an increase in the level of anti-Communism, and anti-Zionist feeling.<sup>747</sup> This paradox made things more difficult for Riyadh, perhaps intentionally, which explained to Arabs that Moscow communism, was not concerned with the Arabs against Israel's aggression against the Palestinians.

Basically the deep mistrust of Moscow put the Saudi state in an entanglement situation. On the one hand, the kingdom would thus be isolated in a tightening pincer of potentially Communist Arab aspirations; with the declared purpose of

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<sup>746</sup> al Fāiṣāl, *Malikan Fī Fikr Ummāh* (1976), 167–171; Umar ḥleeq, *Mūskū Wa-Isrā'īl: Dirāsah Mud'amah Bi-Al-Wathā'iq Li-Juhūd Mūskū Fī Khalq Isrā'īl* (Al-Riyādh: Dār al-su'ūdīah lil-al-Nashr, 1967), 12-44; Al-ḥujilān, *Al-Dawlah* (1967), 50-80.

<sup>747</sup> Al Mosaed, "The USSR and the Gulf States Relations." (1990), 92–15.

destroying the Saudi monarchy. On the other hand, 'the conflict between Arabs and Israel would create newer synergies between his fellow Arabs and Moscow, whom Saudi Arabia considered the real danger (not Israel) to the survival of the dynasty of the House of Saud.'<sup>748</sup> Nevertheless, King Faisal had labored to justify his rigid position with Moscow during the Arab-Israeli conflict and he often felt "the incidents and others were all part and parcel of a plot led by Moscow and its proxies by which communism was going to establish itself militarily in the Middle East, and especially in the Gulf."<sup>749</sup>

Moreover, 'Saudi Arabia always stuck closely to the common Arab line on Israel, and privately Riyadh shared the universal Arab hatred for Zionist movement, in the Cold War, and the hope that Israel could be more rational in its action; but at the same time he was aware that Nasser and his source of power, Moscow, had always presented a more substantial threat to the kingdom than Israel.'<sup>750</sup> Consequently, the Arab-Israeli dispute over Palestine "had, however, reinforced the enmity between the USSR and Saudi Arabia, thereby risking the kingdom being drawn into the Arab-Israeli conflict,<sup>751</sup> and "barring direct Soviet intervention not least because of Saudi's worry about the radicalizing effect in the Arab world of a stalemate over Palestine."<sup>752</sup>

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<sup>748</sup> PCO, FCO 8/757, (BQ 2/1 PART B), 'Saudi Arabian Political Affairs the U.K Policy & Relations', 20 February 1968.

<sup>749</sup> PRO, FCO 8/639, (BK3/23), 'Saudi Arabian Relations with the Gulf States', 16 April 1968.

<sup>750</sup> PCO, FCO 8/757, (BQ 2/1 PART B), 'Saudi Arabian political affairs', (1968).

<sup>751</sup> Wikileaks, US Embassy Jeddah. 1973. " Foreign Policy Prospects for 1975-Saudi Arabia and the Near East." Wikileaks Cable: 1975JIDDA00169\_b At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA00169\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA00169_b.html). (Accessed 10 July 2016).

<sup>752</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 60.



As long as Palestine festers, “the Saudi fears that the surrounding Arab world would be threatened by instability, then the Soviets would be a source of arms for some Arab regimes and eventually Saudi Arabia would be asked to use its oil to force the Americans to extract concessions from the Israelis.”<sup>753</sup> This is not the primary sentiment; rather “it is the sense that Saudi Arabia’s own well-being is directly affected by what happens in the Arab World either between conservatives or the radical line or Soviet influence seems on the rise in any major Arab country.”<sup>754</sup> Therefore, the opposition to Zionism was not enough to ensure Saudis’ wholehearted support for the Palestinians.

Before 1967, in fact, ‘the Saudis had not been deeply involved with the Palestinian movement and still considered the spread of communism in the Middle East its biggest threat.’<sup>755</sup> In part “this was because the Palestinian activists of the day were typically either leftists, followers of Egypt’s Nasser, or pro-Soviet factions.”<sup>756</sup> Until 1967, what was good for Saudi Arabia was, ironically, often good for Israel in the course of the Cold War.

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>755</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66 (POL 23-7 NEAR E.), *US Embassy, Jeddah, to State Dept.*, 4 May 1966.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid., 32. In addition, Faisal had castigated the Fatah leaders sharply, “claiming that they had interfered in the domestic politics both of Saudi Arabia and of Jordan, and made it clear to his guests that his government would stop all support of the organization if it continued “its subversive activities” in Saudi Arabia and in Jordan. He ended the conversation by declaring that Saudi aid would heretofore only be granted to organizations that came under Yasser Arafat’s authority and would continue as long as the aid was used in the fight against Israel.” For more see: NA, RG59/2584/F.2, A-197, ‘*Monthly Commentary for Saudi Arabia*, May 1970’, 1 June 1970,

Although the animosity between Israel and Saudi Arabia ran deep, both were first and foremost threatened by Nasser's Egypt.<sup>757</sup> The Israeli victory of 1967 was particularly galling for the Arabs and Saudis and in particular, as the defeat was only made possible by the fact that Moscow had not secured its Arab allies enough in the conflict. As a result, Dawisha described the Saudi position with the following words: "the humiliating defeat of Nasser and his brand of revolutionary nationalism at the hand of the Israelis in June 1967 was, in a sense, the catalyst for freeing the Saudis from Egypt's psychological and ideological blockade."<sup>758</sup>

While the death knell for such Arab nationalism may have been sounded by the calamitous 1967 War with Israel, many scholars of this period saw systemic change; the collapse of the Arab system and the rise of the Middle Eastern system that prevails today.<sup>759</sup> Thereafter, Saudi Arabia perceived this as a major opportunity to develop a more comprehensive foreign policy that exploited the primary political threat (communism) with the Zionist entity of Israel. Faisal tried then to reconcile Saudi Arabia with the Arab world after 1967 in such a manner that returned Saudi Arabia to a prominent role on the Arab scene; which it retains today.

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<sup>757</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 104.

<sup>758</sup> Dawisha, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict" (1983), 675. On 1967 War and its implications on the regional order inside the Middle East, see also Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990); Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (1981); Hudson, *Arab Politics* (1977); Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994); Leffer, *The Cold War in the Middle East: Suez Crisis to Camp David Accords* (2010).

<sup>759</sup> Michael N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System," *International Organization* 48, no. 3 (1995): 479–510.

In a documentary account which has drawn attention to Saudi Arabia's pivotal role after the 1967 war; a theme that was repeatedly stressed: 'it was Nasser whom King Faisal castigated for his reckless provocation of Israel and whom he held directly responsible for the subsequent Arab debacle. Faisal had little else except an iron nerve plus a rather flimsy anti-Nasser front barely camouflaged under the title of Islamic solidarity.'<sup>760</sup>

Although As'ad Abukhalil went to great lengths to analyze how Saudi Arabia took the Palestinians into account after the 1967 war, Saudi observation of the Palestinian issue came almost as an afterthought after convincing Arabs about the real danger of Communism.<sup>761</sup> As such, "strengthened by its emerging financial power, Saudi Arabia was clearly determined to move from a defensive to an offensive role as leader of the conservative and moderate Arab forces on a number of issues, including the Arab-Israeli conflict and face of alien doctrines and ideologies."<sup>762</sup> Accordingly, after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war the Saudis had less to fear from Egypt and Faisal began to play a more assertive role, drawing on the burgeoning oil resources of his country. Yet, "Saudi Arabia remained wedded to a less sanguine view of Soviet intentions."<sup>763</sup> Saudi Arabian policy between 1967 and 1973 achieved a strong measure of influence in the front-line countries. 'While Nasser was still alive, King Faisal encouraged him to accept the

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<sup>760</sup> PCO, FCO 8/757 (BQ 2/1 PART B), 'Saudi Arabian political affairs'.(1968).

<sup>761</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 182–190.

<sup>762</sup> Dawisha, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict." (1983), 676.

<sup>763</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 65.

Rogers Plan and thus shift his position in favor of the United States solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, instead of relying on Moscow.’<sup>764</sup>

The Arab nations, with Syria and Egypt in the lead, “hurried to call on Saudi Arabia not to renew oil supplies to nations who had cooperated with Israel.”<sup>765</sup> Even the Arab attempt to impose an embargo on oil exports during the Six- Day War was a complete fiasco for Riyadh, but it principally meant deterioration in Saudi Arabian-American relations, which King Faisal was not willing to risk in the Cold War. In this context, ‘what started as criticism of the oil embargo in 1967 turned into attacks of increasingly sharpness on Arab strategy and revolutionary socialism associated with communism, with Nasser receiving a major part of the blame.’<sup>766</sup>

It created a hostile environment that increased “black propaganda” about the logic of the oil embargo in 1967. ‘The passive feeling of Saudis led to a reverberation of that oil embargo which in the course of war exacerbated a crucial problem facing the Arabs against Israel. Therefore, such doubt of Saudi officials drew a grim picture and hence no wonder the outcome of this Arab socialist was a disaster.’ <sup>767</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> Mafaz, “*Saudi Arabia*.” (1982), 108–109.

<sup>765</sup> Joseph Mann, “The Syrian Neo-Ba’th Regime and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1966-70,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 5 (2006), 767.

<sup>766</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808, (BS 12/1), ‘*Further Criticism of Arab Oil Policy in Saudi Arabian*’, (1967); PRO, FCO 8/762 (BS 3/1), ‘*Saudi Arabian Press turns to Criticism of President Nasser*’, 5 Aug. 1967; Dan S. Chill, *The Arab Boycott of Israel: Economic Aggression and World Reaction* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 22–68.

<sup>767</sup> PRO, FCO 8/762 (BS 3/1), ‘*Saudi Arabian Press turns to Criticism of President Nasser*’, (1967).

As Saudi official said to the State Department, "As Do our "leftist" brothers want us to perish in hunger in order to let Moscow grow fat? The Arab left with its propaganda machinery is responsible more than anything else for the latest disaster."<sup>768</sup> Faisal realized that he and Nasser had nothing in common and he underlined the differences immediately once the war had finished.<sup>769</sup>

Meanwhile, as Mann noted 'the Soviet leadership had been anxiously following the rising tensions between the two countries'<sup>770</sup> and wanted to regain credibility and apparently to minimize Arab losses through collaborative efforts. Subsequently, the clarification of the Soviet's perceived position in the war enabled Nasser to accept the convening of the conference of Arab leaders in the Khartoum summit more politically,<sup>771</sup> which 'represented the watershed in the internal and external relation of Arab politics.'<sup>772</sup> Therefore, "Nasser was willing to commit himself in the presence of the Saudi representatives and state that Egypt no longer had any intention of undermining the Saudi royal house."<sup>773</sup>

<sup>768</sup> PRO, FCO 8/808, (BS 12/1), 'Further Criticism of Arab Oil Policy in Saudi Arabian' (1967); PRO, FCO 8/762 (BS 3/1), 'Saudi Arabian Press turns to Criticism of President Nasser', (1967).

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Mann, "The Syrian Neo-Ba'th Regime and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (2006), 772.

<sup>771</sup> For the most complete account on the Khartoum summit, the three (no) of Arabs that unified the regional powers against Israeli aggression along with the Saudi role, see Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990), 68; Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 118-140; Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 232-237.

<sup>772</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 232.

<sup>773</sup> Mann, "The Syrian Neo-Ba'th Regime and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (2006), 768. Joseph also made the argument that, 'the political rapprochement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which had led to an agreement wherein it was decided to withdraw Egyptian forces from Yemen by the end of 1967.' See: Mann, *King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser.* (2012), 754. This also coincided

The Saudis felt the Arabs' defeat was perceived as a Soviet policy failure in military and strategic techniques towards Arabs. For Saudis and other American allies "the war had served a blow to Soviet prestige and credibility, tarnishing their reputation, both with regard to the quality of their arms and training and to Soviet willingness to assist a third world client crisis situation."<sup>774</sup> The Saudi hostile attitude towards the Soviets was extended to all sources of Moscow's policies in the Arab World due to an altering political landscape. More concretely, supplying military equipment was no longer necessary to structural changes regarding his extreme negative view about Moscow. Instead, Saudi objective was to see Soviet troops fighting with Arabs to liberate Palestine; which could shuffle the regional power balance if it happened.

Together the aforementioned elements framed Saudi's view of Moscow which was the Soviets could not convince the Arabs to take their side against the Zionist threat, and by the same token the Arabs could be a target of the Soviet menace instead, they should take matters into their own hands.

The 1967 war was indeed a watershed in the Middle Eastern states' foreign policies, which had revealed the vulnerability of Egypt and its leadership and the negative elements of the Soviet involvements with Arabs. Gerges concluded "that one of the main reasons for the decline of the Soviet influence in the Arab world in the early 1970s lay in Arab perceptions of Moscow's stance during the June

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with the British withdrawal from Aden that left Saudi Arabia in fear about revolutionary activity against the House of Saud. For more details look at PRO, FCO 8/356 (BA 3/9), 'South Arabia', 8 Oct. 1967; PRO, FCO 8/45 (BS 3/14), 'Arab Subversion in South Arabia the Gulf and Saudi Arabia', 29 Oct. 1967.

<sup>774</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (1990), 68.

1967 War; where the balance of power shifted dramatically in favor of the Arab conservatives.”<sup>775</sup> Thus, Saudi Arabia was able to recapture some of his influence over the 1967 Palestinian-Israeli crisis. As a result, Egypt, under Nasser's leadership, suffering from the catastrophic results of the war with Israel, could no longer endure the dire economic difficulties resulting from that defeat.

This inauguration of Abukhalil's concept of 'the new Saudi era', as being “characterized by a number of features that underlined the supreme role of Saudi Arabia in inter-Arab politics as the guide in the battle against Israel (in his mind it was a battle against Zionism and Communism),”<sup>776</sup> is a particularly helpful concept with which to understand the development of foreign policy. When applied to Saudi Arabia in the 1960s, we can see that the post-1967 period saw Saudi Arabia playing a major role regionally, removing the Soviet Union's role from the Middle East. At this level, as Dawisha noted “Saudi Arabia was clearly determined to move from a defensive to an offensive role as leader of the conservative and moderate Arab forces on a number of issues, including the Arab-Israeli conflict.”<sup>777</sup>

The regional implications of the 1967 defeat led to new efforts to foster the Palestinian issue in line with the ideological litmus test of Saudi policy in the Cold War serving domestic needs was certainly not lost on Saudis. Needless to say the post-1967 situation in the Arab world strengthened Saudi's pan-Islamism policy and enabled Saudi Arabia to seize the opportunity to step into the

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<sup>775</sup> Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (1994), 226-230.

<sup>776</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 100-101.

<sup>777</sup> Dawisha, “Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict” (1983), 676.

leadership vacuum in the region.<sup>778</sup> Moreover, 1967 was not the end for Saudi Arabia against the enemies of Islam; the Saudi kingdom attempted to develop an “ethos-enhancing strategy”<sup>779</sup> that it could use to convince its Arab brothers on restoring self-confidence. In this manner, the king himself made an all-out effort to explain that the defeat was due to Arabs having abandoned their religion and allied themselves with the alien ideologies of secularist and communist nations.<sup>780</sup>

Saudi local sources confirmed that Moscow had few illusions in the conflict, beyond helping Arabs, and all were destined to fail. In fact, this trend has been preoccupied with Saudi writing; which thought Moscow’s role in the conflict was to employ the motto Secularism, revolution and progress against, conservative states, Islam and Palestinian rights. Such negative views of the USSR role in the conflict remained strong; developing and increasing between the 1960s and 1970s. Besides, Faisal’s government utilized its Islamic mission, as discussed in the previous chapter, to spread its influence within the Islamic World including the Palestinian issue to include efforts of the communist threat of and hence pursuit of its own agendas of Islamic resurrection.

Therefore, the issue of Palestine was the chance for the Saudi political writers to exploit communism and draw parallels between its dangers in the Arab world with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Salāḥ al-Munjīd, for example, provided something “missing” in our understanding of the conflict. He confirms “the inescapable fact’

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<sup>778</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 77-78.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.



that if we think Moscow sided with Arabs, it would be an unmitigated disaster of inarticulate diplomatic amateurishness.”<sup>781</sup> By way of contrast, for al-Munjīd, the Soviet Union would mainly shoulder the responsibility of the crisis that led to the defeat of 1967. Precisely al-Munjīd put forward that “Immigrants flew from Moscow to Israel, which helped Israel immensely to build up its human demographic, which enabled the aggressor state to fill its occupied lands with migrants who came principally from the atheist-communist Soviet Union.... We knew the assistance from the U.S. was money and power but the USSR was bigger and more dangerous which was by far more precarious than money or any other assistance... Hence... where is the so-called friendship between Arabs and Soviets?”<sup>782</sup>

Here, Israeli occupation went in line with the domestic and regional policy consideration that was increasingly accompanied by “anti-Moscow negative participation” in the conflict, which was apparently exaggerated.

The Saudi writer ‘Umar ḥleeq gave a few examples of the shortcomings in our understanding of the relations between the Soviet Union and Israel since 1948. ḥleeq postulated the idea that ‘the Communist Moscow was the main broker of creating the Israeli state and enabled it to flourish over the years.’<sup>783</sup> He went on to ask “what really drove the Arab leftists to embrace Moscow’s agendas in Middle Eastern politics was the Palestinian issue. The Zionist entity is the bastion

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<sup>781</sup> ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjīd, *āḥdīth ‘an Faiṣal Wa- Al-Tazamn Al-Isāmi* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-jadeed, 1974), 34.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>783</sup> ḥleeq, *Mūskū Wa-Isrā’īl* (1967), 14.

of Western imperialism as Arab leftists though! “Yes”.....But still it has a fully diplomatic, economic and cultural relationship with the Soviet Union!!!”<sup>784</sup> He then considered ‘the Soviet strategy to be driven by a desire to control Middle Eastern oil and destroy their religion which thereby had little interest in solving the Palestinian issue. All in all, Moscow had a keen interest in keeping and strengthening Israeli as it appears to be a center point to its role in the Middle East.’<sup>785</sup>

Increasingly enough, equating Moscow with Israel was to be a characteristic feature of Saudi policy in the Cold War, framed in such a manner that the people felt united in their struggle against these two evils. This development confirmed “Saudi’s belief that the Soviets would seek to exploit regional tensions to gain a military foothold in the region and to drive a wedge between the United States and moderate Arabs.”<sup>786</sup> Here Vassiliev added that “ King Faisal was, at any rate, not inclined to acknowledge any positive role for the Soviet Union in the region. He would seek another, hidden, meaning in Soviet policy, certain of a secret alliance between communism and Zionism, even as the defeat of Egypt, Syria and Jordan at the hands of Zionists helped enhance the influence of the atheist Soviet Union among Arab countries.”<sup>787</sup> Saudi’s inclination regarding the Zionist and Bolshevik’ conspiracy had become more demented than ever after 1967 and

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<sup>784</sup> Ibid

<sup>785</sup> Ibid.,22–33.

<sup>786</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 66.

<sup>787</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 311.

“this connection evolved one novel concept earlier than any other Arab leader.”<sup>788</sup>

Still, Saudi’s centerpiece continued to agitate Moscow in the conflict. King Faisal rejected the Arab leaders’ opinions of the Soviet role as having damaged and divided the Muslim nations. This reflected Faisal’s understanding of international affairs as king, which was a combination of fundamentalist religious belief and pragmatism.<sup>789</sup> The latter was a matter of conjecture, but what is indisputable is that pragmatism did not fit well with his policy against the Zionist entity and communism. ‘Beyond the antipathy to these ideologies; one could say his policy and concept was distinguished by flexibility and pragmatism.’<sup>790</sup> Quandt’s characterization of Saudi foreign policy with the Soviets in the late 1960s was as a new trend toward moderation, away from the Soviets-Zionists. “It was indicative of the transformation of style with which Saudi’s policy has executed its foreign policy that signified the new Saudi leadership of the Arab world was beginning and that would have a clear impact on the Soviet influence in the area.”<sup>791</sup>

Of course, by the end of the 1967 war and its consequences there was disagreement between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. about how to manage the Palestinian issue; ending with stalemate on how to manage the post-war conflict. Yet Saudis always believed that the U.S. empowerment of Israel was a primary

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<sup>788</sup> David and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 290.

<sup>789</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 334.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>791</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 66-69.

factor on radicalization of the Arab World, thus strengthening the position of both the USSR and communism in the region. This delicate balance challenged America's relationship with Saudi Arabia but anti-Communist interest was still able to override the tension between the two countries to operate much more closely.<sup>792</sup> In this respect, the King's view that "the difference between the West and the developing world was never as important as the difference between the God-fearing and atheist regimes"<sup>793</sup> was more politically palatable for him. The genuine hopes for Saudi Arabia had been that the U.S could do something to ease Saudi Arabia's exposure because of its association with the United States while the latter was viewed as supporting Israel unconditionally.<sup>794</sup>

The latter proved a headache for Riyadh. On the one hand the Saudi hostility to the USSR and on the other hand complying with popular antipathy to the American position in the conflict impeded Saudi's move toward resolving the conflict. Thus "Rightly or wrongly the Saudis profess to believe that a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would reduce the dangers they see in the Middle East and communism was uppermost of them."<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 105.

<sup>793</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 340.

<sup>794</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 141. This reflected an earlier discourse by a few Arab nationalists, who associated Saudi Arabia with the U.S for the plights of Palestine, as fighting communism, was more important for Saudis than the Palestine issue. Hence the Saudis would always deflect criticisms of its pro-American policies by invoking heavy religious overdose on the Palestinian question in order to deter the Soviets. See: AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 103; Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: East* (2009), 33–50.

<sup>795</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 33.

At this point neither the Saudis nor anyone else foresaw the enormity of the future escalation of the Palestinian issue and its impact on petroleum prices and the financial inducements that the Kingdom could offer as a result.<sup>796</sup> The more intriguing question is: how did things change from late 1967 up to 1973 that contributed to the oil embargo of 1973? Did that mark a major shift or rapprochement towards the USSR?

**It was “an emotional decision” not “a change alliance ”**

One important development for Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the 1967 war was evidenced in the demonstration of its intentions to resolve the Palestinian issue on its own terms. Broadly speaking, wrote Rachel Bronson, “Saudi Arabian foreign policy after 1967 was determined to prevent the emergence of an anti-Saudi firebrand of the Palestinian problem.”<sup>797</sup> As mentioned earlier, Saudi prominence post-1967 incorporated the Palestinian struggle into Saudi’s policy, which could counterbalance the Marxist groups such as Fatah. According to James Piscatori, “Faisal proved remarkably successful at transferring the Arab-Israeli conflict from the exclusively Arab plane to the broader Islamic one.”<sup>798</sup> In this regard, as Brown argued correctly, “Saudi Arabia under Faisal had been, and would continue to be, “no less fervent in its defense of the right of the Palestinians than any other Arab nation.”<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>796</sup> David and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 290.

<sup>797</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 108.

<sup>798</sup> Piscatori, “Islamic Values and National Interest.” (1983), 42.

<sup>799</sup> Brown, *Oil, God and Gold* (1999), 285.

To an extent, Riyadh hoped to improve the state of the Palestinian issue, which might help to counter Soviet gains in the Arab World; and "careful not to tarnish the country's reputation of being an agent or lackey of US imperialism."<sup>800</sup> Henceforth, 'in the period between 1967 and 1975, the most pressing problems for Saudis were: the solution of the Palestinian issue and; eliminating the expansion of foreign ideologies in the Muslim world.'<sup>801</sup> Thus these considerations were part of the core ideological foreign policy and the symbolism of the Arab struggle. After 1967 "Faisal's policy was essentially pragmatic and for the present he is treading carefully, patiently watching how matters develop in Arab counsels and saying very little."<sup>802</sup>

Yet, this pragmatism was heavily influenced by an implacable aversion to the state of Israel policy post -1967 and deep political opposition to the USSR and its allies in the Middle East.<sup>803</sup> These trends made his pragmatic policy seem less practical and more enigmatic and whimsical which seemed to be mixed and extruded with a sympathetic ideological Islamic orientation. Ideology over pragmatism which after 1967 became more apparent with King Faisal, was reported by the British Embassy in his speech in 1969:

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<sup>800</sup> Wikileaks Department of State Washington. 1973. " *King Faisal Calls For Early Solution to Arab- Israeli Problem.*" Wikileaks Cable: 1973STATE078404\_b. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973STATE078404\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973STATE078404_b.html). (Accessed 8 June 2016.)

<sup>801</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 78.

<sup>802</sup> FCO 8/808, (BS 2/4), 'Saudi Arabia during and after the Arab-Israeli War', (1967).

<sup>803</sup> Sheean, *Faisal* (1975), 102.

“It is needless for me, dear brothers, to explain what goes on at the Third Holy Mosque and the First Qiblah of Islam from violation of the sanctities to the abuse of dignity and morality... Dear brothers.... What are waiting for? Shall we wait for the world conscience to do anything? Where is this conscience that can see, hear and feel such atrocities and contempt committed openly in front of everybody? Dear brothers, the Holy city of Jerusalem appeals to you to rescue it from this tribulation.... Is there a better death than the sacrifice of one’s life for the holy Jihad in the way of Allah.”<sup>804</sup>

Faisal displayed his emotions towards Jerusalem in an emotional manner simply to demonstrate that he was addressing the issue. At this time Faisal was expected by his people to play a dominant role in regional politics, and the call for an Islamic summit conference gave him a least the illusion of action. Hence, “for a man so orthodox in his Islamic faith, Faisal’s call for a Jihad is a theological absurdity.”<sup>805</sup> Thus, the exacerbation of the Palestinian issue linked to the conventional struggles against the Zionist enemy of Islam, which was combined with an anti-Soviet stance. Subsequently, pure religious ideology was also at play.

However, by the end of the 1960s the superpowers were co-operating in imposing a settlement that would avoid any direct confrontation with Israel. Middle East leaders faced serious political challenges that had their origins in the 1967 war.

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<sup>804</sup> PRO, FCO 8/1201, (NBS 18/1) Part A, ‘*Saudi Arabia Islamic Diplomacy*’, 31 October 1968.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid.

Nasser declared in March 1969 a “war of attrition”, with the Soviets. Each time the fighting took a bad turn for Egypt; Nasser called upon the Soviets for further assistance to keep going. Nasser demanded Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries confront the U.S. by using their oil. Faisal’s expressed willingness to do this provided Nasser got rid of the Soviet connections.<sup>806</sup> This move opened the door to an increasing military dependency among regional actors. As such, “the injection of the superpowers rivalry into the war of attrition created a real danger for an eventual clash between the superpowers themselves.”<sup>807</sup> Here, ‘Saudis complained that the Soviet Union systemically continued to distort the region for its own purpose, which become an element in the growing schism between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.’<sup>808</sup>

Hardly surprising, Saudi’s anti- Communist stance did not change during the war of attrition; let alone re-directing its robust policy to the Soviet Union or seeing eye to eye with Moscow to find a solution to this issue. In essence, Saudi’s policy remained unchanged, seeking to fight “the two evils” in a way placing the kingdom between the West and the Muslim world. The U.S. policy in the region in the 1960s in “Fighting communism” had, however, reinforced the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia in a manner that Riyadh hoped it could find a solution to the Palestinian struggle.<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia (1985)*, 140.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.;142.

<sup>808</sup> NARA, RG59, S/S visit, Files: Lot 67 D 587, *Visit of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia*, 21-23 June 1966, Vol, II, Memcons, Admin and Sub. Misc, “ Proposed Strategy for Visit of King Faisal”, 1 June 1966.

<sup>809</sup> Faisal desperately pleaded with the U.S to do something to end the situation wherein, in his view, the continuing Israeli occupation fueled the spread of Soviet influence and Arab radicalism. The U.S announced the Rogers plan in 1969.



More explicitly Bronson contended that, "The political and religious ends came together as increased religiosity served both the pragmatists, who understood the need to work with the US, and rebuff Soviet expansionism and the lefties, determined to pursue ideologically pure policies to further political ends."<sup>810</sup> The pragmatism with extremist ideology did not impact Faisal's domestic legitimacy negatively at that time, but remained preferable to the political benefit of standing against the Soviets.

The extent of the Saudi political atmosphere was best displayed by the involvement of the US more than ever in the Palestinian issue and ensured that the Americans felt compelling Israel to accept settlement would deter the Soviets from exploiting the issue and massively destabilizing events in the region. This tactic did not prove useful to the Americans in connecting the Palestinian issue with fighting communism given the fact this was another vehicle used by Saudi Arabia to combat leftists and communism by the Saudi view of the Palestinian issue.<sup>811</sup>

The new dynamic force in the Arab world seemed to be the need for great work on the Palestinian resistance. The wave of self-criticism and soul-searching throughout the Arab World, which produced a revival of religion as political force to be brandished against Israel.<sup>812</sup> It goes without saying that it was a sense of unity against the Zionist and Communist forces, a theme that was repeatedly

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<sup>810</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 241.

<sup>811</sup> AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia* (2003), 192-193.

<sup>812</sup> Ibdi; NA, RG59/2584/F.2, A-004, 'Monthly Commentary for Saudi Arabia, December 1970', 12 Jan. 1971.

stressed. The extreme leftist regime in Syria was ousted by the more Moderate Baathists under Hafiz al-Assad, which saw Syria moving in the right direction which Saudi Arabia welcomed and encouraged.<sup>813</sup> Having sensed direct danger in the 1970s, and perceiving new opportunities after Nasser, the Saudis tried to use their influence to weaken Soviet influence in the Arab World. Nasser was succeeded by Anwar who was more disposed to accommodate the Saudis than to seek to dominate them.<sup>814</sup> Consequently "crucial contact had been made that was later to change the balance of power in the Middle East accrued then."<sup>815</sup> Saudi Arabia had become a leader in the Arab World at the - expense of the radical, pro-Soviet states.

Subsequently, "Sadat was soon to reverse Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union dramatically and to alter the region's political strategic configuration in a way that was much more favorable for the Saudis."<sup>816</sup> Crucially, Saudi attempted from the outset to change Egypt's policy course from Moscow and maximize Saudi power against the Soviets, emphasizing this might encourage the U.S. to adopt a more forceful and positive policy in the Middle East towards Palestine.<sup>817</sup>

Over the course of the next several years, Saudi Arabia tried to lure Egypt from Soviet clutches in providing Egypt the freedom to purchase arms from outside the Soviet block. Sadat's daring, supported by Saudi resources, culminated in a

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<sup>813</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 66-67.

<sup>814</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 144.

<sup>815</sup> PRO, FCO 8/1734 (NBS 1/2), 'Saudi Arabia: Annual Review for 1970', 31 Dec. 1970; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 292.

<sup>816</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 144.

<sup>817</sup> Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 294; Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 112.

dramatic geopolitical shift.<sup>818</sup> Moscow's confidence was shaken as Sadat demonstrated his independence from Moscow early on by 'currying favor with domestic and Arab world anti-Communists.'<sup>819</sup> In 1972 Sadat ordered home approximately twenty thousands Soviet advisors, writes Haykal, "which was a sign of U.S. and Saudi tacit support for Sadat's bold gesture."<sup>820</sup>

This expulsion of Soviet experts brought immense relief to the Saudi government and opened the way for a solid strategic alliance between Riyadh and Cairo that enabled the U.S. to occupy a prominent role in foreign policy considerations for both of them. Moreover, it developed a political dimension since 1970 that proved to be enduring in a number of ways, not least because the Arabs could not expect themselves to depend on Moscow as a means of maximizing their political goals in the region. More important is the fact that Saudi Arabia hastened the breakup of Moscow's relationship with Egypt in order to affect the attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, as the CIA Memo indicated "If the Arabs succeed in achieving some of their goals regarding Israel, more of the credit will go to Saudi oil than to Soviet arms."<sup>821</sup> In this process "Immediately after Sadat ordered the Soviets out of Egypt, King Faisal again urged the U.S. to undertake a new initiative to advance a settlement acceptable to the Arabs, now that the Americans' previous excuse of reason for high-level

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<sup>818</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>819</sup> Jon D. Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 102.

<sup>820</sup> Haykal, *Sphinx and Commissar: Arab World* (1978), 220-221.

<sup>821</sup> CIA Memo, Document Number: 51112a4b993247d4d839453a, " *The USSR and the Arab Oil Weapon.*" 8-9, 7 December 1973. At <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/51112a4b993247d4d839453a>. (Accessed 10 September 2015).

support for Israel- putting pressure on the Soviets- had become almost invalid.”<sup>822</sup>

To this end, Saudi Arabia relations with Sadat’s regime grew closer, particularly when Sadat started to dismantle much of the Nasserist legacy in internal and foreign affairs. Therefore, as Vassiliev argued rightly “the rapprochement with Saudi Arabia furthered Sadat’s policy of ending cooperation with the USSR and led to a full shift towards a pro-US orientation.”<sup>823</sup> In this sense, Faisal more than Sadat thought this bold move from Egypt would have given Egypt and the Arabs, as Kissinger remembered “reciprocal gestures”<sup>824</sup> from the U.S. What Saudi Arabia actually wanted, however, was to forge good relationships between the U.S. and the Arab World away from Moscow that could shape by action principles, which served to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis.

This latter element was the major driving factor of Faisal’s decision to use oil as a weapon in 1973. According to Vassiliev, “Faisal did not know and could not have known much of the behind scenes games, but his logic was simple: Egypt and Syria were waging a just war, the people of Saudi Arabia demanded that they be supported and the U.S. happened to be on the side of Israel. That called for the use of the ‘Oil as weapon’.”<sup>825</sup>

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<sup>822</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 152.

<sup>823</sup> In order to appease Faisal, Sadat released several members of the Muslim Brotherhood from Jail. Also Nasser’s faithful supporters were removed from important state and party posts. See: Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 385.

<sup>824</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (2000), 354.

<sup>825</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 385.

King Faisal in fact had wanted to use oil “to persuade rather than to pressurize the U.S. into changing its attitude towards Middle East problems.”<sup>826</sup> The tide of emotion running through the Arab World, the suddenness of the outbreak of the war, and the apprehension of the kingdom generally proved stronger than fine calculation about ends and means. Saudi Arabia was in potential danger of exposing itself dangerously as a result of the firm and fundamentalist stand that it had taken. The onus was on the kingdom to deliver a satisfactory settlement.<sup>827</sup>

From this angle, Saudi Arabia was determined to keep Egypt from reverting to a radical stance, time and again made statements to the press and pleaded with the U.S. to apply pressure on Israel. To the Saudi regime, refusing to help Sadat meant reigniting regional radicalism and endangering his Muslim position and recreating the atmosphere of conspiracy, which led to many attempts against the country.

Interestingly, Kissinger pontificated “if the U.S. distanced itself from Israel this was likely to encourage the Soviets to increase their commitment to the Arabs.”<sup>828</sup> Faisal informed Kissinger in fact “that the occupied territories could only help to facilitate the communist expansion in the region.”<sup>829</sup> Together these two different views from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia became the major public issue

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<sup>826</sup> Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 327.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid., 344-345.

<sup>828</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 152. Here Robert Lacey reported the meeting between Faisal and Kissinger where Faisal raised the issue that: “Israel is advancing communist objectives.... Among those of the Jewish faith there in Israel are embracing Zionism.... They want to establish a communist base right in the Middle East.” Lacey, *The Kingdom* (1982), 418.

<sup>829</sup> Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud* (1981), 347.

during the history of the Cold War; hence, playing the communist threat as a pressing card developed contentious action between them. This paradox arguably represented the moment for Moscow, which offered an excellent lens through which to view Riyadh's relationship with the West.

Similarly, Kissinger observed that "the likelihood is also that the Kremlin believed that its interests were served whatever happened. If the Arabs did well, the credit would go to Soviet arms and Soviet support. If they did poorly, Moscow thought it could emerge as the champion of the Arab cause; consequent radicalization of the Arab world would strengthen Soviet friends and perhaps even get rid of Egypt's troublesome Sadat, for what he did to them previously."<sup>830</sup>

Thus Faisal became gradually aware of the American perception, and "he tried to bring about its modification by placing increasing weight behind Egypt and Syria."<sup>831</sup> So when his attempts to get America to act failed, he 'accepted Sadat's decision to go to war and promised the use of oil to support him.'<sup>832</sup> Faisal and others had hoped that Nixon's administration would bring greater American engagement with the Arab-Israeli dispute. 'He appealed to the values of "Justice" and "Goodness" and "Right" in an attempt to convince the American people of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.'<sup>833</sup> Since Saudi Arabia could no longer afford to be at war with Israel; its role then "would be to activate the 'oil

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<sup>830</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (1982), 469–470.

<sup>831</sup> Safran, *Saudi Arabia* (1985), 153.

<sup>832</sup> Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (164-165), 164–165.

<sup>833</sup> Al-Qsaimi, *The Politics of Persuasion* (2000), 81.

weapon.”<sup>834</sup> However, the Saudis sought to increase world commitment to Palestine’s legal rights; cautioning not to subordinate the issue to Moscow’s order or at least restrain Palestinian ambitions.

The prominence of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the context of the Cold War struggle increased before the 1973 war. Saudi Arabia aimed at gaining as much equal support from the U.S. regarding Palestine as he had in his struggle with communism. Henry Kissinger recounted his meeting with Faisal and how he was “preoccupied with the linkage between Soviet infiltrations if Israel still occupies the Arab territory.’ Kissinger explained how Faisal criticized the U.S. in developing the following statement if the Arabs “won” the Middle East was to forfeit to the Soviet Union. If the Arabs “lost,” the Soviet advisers would be invited back into Egypt. It would grow impossible for any Arab to say with pride that he was America’s friend.”<sup>835</sup>

For Saudis using oil as a weapon was understood by the CIA as, “the future status of Jerusalem will be a major problem. Without progress, production will be reduced to and remain at levels well below consumer needs.”<sup>836</sup> King Faisal and other Persian Gulf rulers would not wish matters to reach the state where oil-consuming states were threatening the Gulf producers with force. This was because “Faisal and his fellow rulers certainly wish to use oil as a weapon to get

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<sup>834</sup> Dawisha, “Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict” (1983), 677.

<sup>835</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (1982), 528.

<sup>836</sup> CIA, NIE, 1973. Document Number: 51112a4a993247d4d8394476, “*Using Oil as a Weapon: Implications and Prospects for the Arab Oil Producing States*”, 23 November 1973. At <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/51112a4a993247d4d8394476>. (Accessed 10 September 2015).

results on the Israeli situation, but do not want to tear down the whole structure of relations with Western Europe, Japan, and the U.S.”<sup>837</sup>

The idea of the securing the oil fields received a great deal of attention and discussion in D.C. advocating a direct means of regaining control of the Saudi oil fields resulted. Brown developed the point of military intervention further and outlined that “not only might it become necessary as a stratagem to bring Saudi Arabian oil production and pricing under U.S. control, but it also might need to be implemented if the Saudi oil fields happened to fall into the hostile hands.”<sup>838</sup> Henry Kissinger flew to Riyadh to discuss with the king lifting the oil Embargo. Two reporters who were present with Kissinger gave specific details about what took place.

In the meeting, two journalists, Marvin and Bernard Kalb, offered insights and hence wrote: “Faisal described himself as fiercely anti-Communist and anti-Zionist. He accused the Jews of aggression and expansionism, noting that he believed them to be responsible for the Communist revolution in Russia. Their actions in Israel were but the latest evidence of their avarice for power. But he Stopped them with his oil weapon.”<sup>839</sup> However, a western official tried to understand how and why the embargo got started and if that presaged a new rapprochement between the USSR and Saudi Arabia. The CIA report assessed and denied that, “Soviet press has encouraged such action, all available evidence indicates that the USSR had no hand in the planning and implementation of the

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<sup>837</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>838</sup> Brown, *Oil, God and Gold* (1999), 301.

<sup>839</sup> Marvin L. Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), 515.



Arab oil supply cutbacks.”<sup>840</sup> Finally, “Communist nations are not on the Arabs' favored list, and some cutbacks in Arab oil deliveries to Eastern Europe have resulted.”<sup>841</sup>

Caught between his hatred for Zionists and Communists, Frank Jungers the senior Aramco American executive in Saudi Arabia during the crisis explained his meeting with Faisal towards the concern of fueling American ships in the operation against the Soviet ones. Jungers added:

“I explained to the king that this was a real problem and I understood his thinking, but if and when there was to be a shift in the Israeli policy of the United States, it certainly could not happen tomorrow... The King listened carefully and he said, “Are you telling me that this approach is not instigated by the oil companies?”<sup>842</sup> “I said no; he well understood then that while I was not a designated emissary from the U.S. government, which was where it had come from. So he said, “Well, I really don’t know how you are going to do this.” He said that in such a way that led me to believe that he would not make an issue of it. The King was up to me and said, “God help you if you get caught, or if it becomes a public issue.” <sup>843</sup>

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<sup>840</sup> CIA Memo, “The USSR and the Arab Oil Weapon.”(1973).

<sup>841</sup> Ibid.

<sup>842</sup> Frank Jungers, Regional Oral History Office University of California, “American perspectives of Aramco, *the Saudi-Arabian oil-producing company, 1930s to 1980s: oral history transcript project / 1995*”. At [https://archive.org/stream/aramcooilproduc00hickrich/aramcooilproduc00hickrich\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/aramcooilproduc00hickrich/aramcooilproduc00hickrich_djvu.txt). (Accessed 22 July 2016).

<sup>843</sup> Ibid.

Though shrouded in secrecy, “Aramco then had veiled permission to allow Saudi oil to flow toward American warships and bases to hamper Russian military in the Eastern Mediterranean.”<sup>844</sup> Therefore, ‘Saudi Arabia was keen to support anti-Soviet forces throughout the Middle East and even outside the region.’<sup>845</sup>

Moreover, during the oil embargo the Soviets attempted to test Saudi reaction to such a possibility or to sow dissent between the Saudis and the west. Yet, “this illusion about the possible changes in Saudi Arabia’s policy soon disappeared when the Saudis compromised with the West rather than forcing a confrontation.”<sup>846</sup> In this sense, “the U.S. and the West at large were paying a political and economic price for their support of Israel, but Saudi Arabia was not going to undermine U.S. military potential in its standoff with the godless Soviet Union.”<sup>847</sup> Thus, Saudi Arabia was aware that “the embargo and the rapid increase of oil prices had catastrophic effects on the ability of Western Europe and the U.S. to counter the Soviet Union, and Western economic chaos certainly did not the serve the kingdom’s interest.”<sup>848</sup>

“The aftermath of the oil crisis of 1973, especially its ruinous impact on the Western economy, revived Soviet hopes. Without lifting a finger, they gained a tremendous strategic victory and some economic advantage, “while the West suffered an enormous strategic and economic blow.”<sup>849</sup>

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<sup>844</sup> Brown, *Oil, God and Gold* (1999), 295-296.

<sup>845</sup> Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), 394.

<sup>846</sup> Yodfat, *In the Direction of the Persian Gulf* (1977), 94.

<sup>847</sup> Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 391.

<sup>848</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 98.

<sup>849</sup> Yodfat, *In the Direction of the Persian Gulf* (1977), 94.

"The Soviets watched this process gleefully, 'claiming it part of the decline of Western Capitalism-which they have always predicted.'" <sup>850</sup> WikiLeaks cable throughout the oil crisis gave us an insight into Saudi's view of the USSR in the midst of the crisis. Faisal met with a few American senators from the US during the oil crisis. "The King disputed the premise that Saudi Arabia would establish relationships with Moscow or that he would be going to Moscow for this purpose. He affirmed with great emphasis that Saudi Arabia would never establish relationships with any communist countries. Such stories, he believes were good examples of how Zionists and Communists were seeking to poison Saudi-America relations."<sup>851</sup>

Moreover, Western chaos and Soviet aggrandizement did not server Riyadh's interest. According to Bronson "while Riyadh could live with friction in its relationships within the Arab-Israeli conflict, it could not, however, countenance problems spilling over into the large geostrategic arenas and worked actively to prevent that from happening."<sup>852</sup> Since the 1973 War Saudi Arabia has emerged as a new important power in the Middle East and a highly important factor in U.S. foreign policy in the region and throughout the Cold War. Because of Saudi leverage of Egypt and Syria and Faisal's government role in eroding the monument of radical Marxist regimes since the beginning of 1970s, the US

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid. & Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia* (2012), 129.

<sup>851</sup> Wikileaks, US Embassy Jeddah. 1973. "*King Refutes rumors of improved SAG-USSR Relations.*" Wikileaks Cable: 1973JIDDA05217. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973JIDDA05217\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973JIDDA05217_b.html). (Accessed 14 May 2016).

<sup>852</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 122.

perceived that as a valuable factor and sought to support it.<sup>853</sup> More important than the Arab-Israeli conflict, was the danger of communism, which the Saudis saw as the ultimate threat to Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world at large. "It influenced the king's decision to allow emergency shipments of oil to the U.S. military in violation of the embargo."<sup>854</sup> Thereby, "Saudi Arabia considered its geostrategic competition with the Soviets and its relationship with the United States more important than the Arab-Israeli one, and viewed the United States as its long-term central partner in that large struggle."<sup>855</sup> Bronson deduced that "Nixon had also sublimated the Arab -Israeli crisis to the global struggle against communism. Under conditions of duress, Riyadh would not subject its global interest to more local ones. Riyadh did of course try to serve both its regional and global interests. But when the two clashed, as they did in 1973, its global self-interest prevailed."<sup>856</sup> Overall, the use of the "oil weapon" during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, and the enormous increase in oil prices enhanced the kingdom's leverage to become the leader of the conservative Arab states of the Middle East. Even the relationship with the U.S. was challenged because of the embargo, yet the argument of the primacy of the anti-Communism sphere remained recurrent. Therefore, Saudi Arabia re-cooperated with the U.S. to oppose communism, pro-Soviet regimes and leftist movements in the Middle East and in the third world in general.

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<sup>853</sup> Wikileaks, US Embassy Jeddah. 1975. "*Position of Saudi Arabia and its relations with the United States.*" Wikileaks Cable: 1975JIDDA05438. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA05438\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA05438_b.html). (Accessed May 15, 2016).

<sup>854</sup> Bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962* (2010), 95.

<sup>855</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 120

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusions

This chapter attempted to identify factors that led Saudi Arabian leadership to official insistence on the statement “Communism and Zionism are two sides of the same coin” which directed the Saudi king to pursue his objective from 1967 onward; under which he intended to woo the Arabs away from the Soviets. Saudi’s policy with the Soviet Union can thus be understood as a pattern of continuation of its vision that firstly eliminated the Soviet influence in the Arab World that could lead to balancing the Arab setbacks of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The death of Nasser accompanied by Egypt’s abandonment of Moscow witnessed the initial fruits of this policy, which it wished to extend to the Arab-Israeli War the 1973.

However, one can hypothesize that the use of oil as a weapon was probably driven by two factors. Firstly; it was a riposte to the U.S. after the Arab military operation failed during the war and Saudi Arabia wanted to prevent Arab consideration of shifting back to Moscow. Secondly, and above all, it reduced the amount of accusations that were rife throughout the Cold War, from Moscow and its allies in the Arab World, of the Saudi government to political impotence in regard to its natural resources under the control of Western powers. However, the latter point by that time had benefited the Saudis remarkably to fight communism and support activities ruthlessly since the end of the 1970s.

**Conclusion**

At the onset of this research, the basic assumption is that anti-Communist policy was the distinguishing feature of Saudi Arabian policy in the 1960s and 1970s, laying foundations that would confront Soviet influence over the course of the coming decades of the twentieth century. In this context, Faisal's policy aspired to structure the Saudi role as radically anti-Communist, which correspondingly shaped Saudi Arabia's regional role and influence, as a conservative stability-promoting power, which the U.S. endorsed in the Cold War. From this vantage point, this work has aimed to answer the questions that arose at the outset of this study, offering a more persuasive and analytical approach, rather than regurgitate narratives, and engaging with the analytical framework pertaining to the period.

Likewise, this study shows that the threats Saudi Arabia faced in the Cold War "encircled the Kingdom" thereby labeled as an ideological threat to Islam and linked to Communism. Viewing the Communist threat as a regional and domestic level threat has permitted the study to circumvent traditional discussions, which center on zero-sum analyses. Utilizing the concept of Pan-Islamism in this work as one of the analytical frameworks has allowed for deeper and perhaps more meaningful understanding of Saudi Arabia under Faisal's policy with the USSR in the Cold War. This usage of pan-Islamism helped- as a source of interpretation of the Saudi national-religious discourses in the midst of the Cold War and thus identified the foreign policy behavior.

In addition, this explained to what degree Saudi Arabia supported anti-Communist policies, not simply as a favor to the United States, “but because it viewed such efforts as integral to its own national security.”<sup>857</sup> This demonstrated that the nation’s security was primarily based on thwarting Soviet activities whereby the regional policy developed was a continuation of the global struggle. This was a pattern in Saudi foreign policy throughout the twentieth century. This resulted in forming good relations with the U.S. in order to carry a strong message towards Moscow. Subsequently ‘King Faisal’s successors showed no willingness to reverse or alter the course set by him.’<sup>858</sup>

In this sense, Saudi Arabian policy had a profound impact in the region, which went further than foreign policy outputs, reaching out to the ideological diplomacy that marked the real beginning of the Saudi foreign policy ideology of “Islamic diplomacy”. This new orientation was linked to the domestic context of policymaking in Riyadh within the regional struggle over Soviet penetration in the Middle East. In other words, the domestic policy designed in Riyadh simultaneously drove Faisal’s regional policy decisions, and contributed to the Saudi Arabian view in the Cold War that fueled Saudi fears of outside ideological control, encouraging collective action.

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<sup>857</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 219.

<sup>858</sup> Wikileaks Department of State Washington. 1973. “Position of Saudi Arabia and its Relations with the United States (IV OF IV)”. Wikileaks Cable: 1975JIDDA05438\_b. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA05438\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975JIDDA05438_b.html). (Accessed 7 July 2016).

Moreover, this opposition to communism contributed to a foreign policy tendency based on a refusal to maintain diplomatic relations or open any serious dialogue with communist countries on the one hand, and on maintaining close cooperation with the non-communist western countries, particularly the United States on the other hand. Hence, the outlook of this thesis has shown that the interplay between ideology and pragmatism was the main framework underlying Saudi policy throughout the Cold War, justified by an intrusive Soviet policy shuffling the regional power balance and ultimately emphasizing the necessity for the regime's security.

Finally, the course of Saudi foreign policy throughout the Cold War where "political and religious ends were mutually reinforced"<sup>859</sup> manifested itself on several occasions in fostering anti-Communist Saudi political identity between the 1950s and 1970s, as my thesis argued. Read in this light, the Saudis' fear of the Soviets was based on more than Soviet ambitions in the region; it was the story of an attempt to multiply the communist threat and gambit it at its disposal through the enlistment of its position in the Muslim world and the Western powers in Saudi Arabia's bid for survival. This development created such an interactional mechanism that led to what Thomas Hegghammer theorized in the late 1970s "as the rise of classical Jihadists."<sup>860</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006), 241.

<sup>860</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 38.



**Limitations of the study**

Despite analyzing the implications of the Saudi-USSR relationships, my thesis has largely studied the period of Faisal's policy towards the Soviet Union and its political approach to Moscow. The purpose of this study was to understand Saudi's policy towards the USSR from 1962-1975, but the coverage of this topic in this thesis has been far from complete. Despite analyzing the domestic and regional factors that were intertwined in fighting Communism, my thesis has thus largely remained within the paradigm of Saudi's political stance to the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the study was also limited in its results due to restrictions on archival materials inside Saudi Arabia and official papers that are not represented in this thesis. In addition, the study was limited in its usage of school textbooks,<sup>861</sup> which were discarded in Saudi Arabia; therefore access to them was extremely difficult. Even though I used a large number of Arabic sources in this work to contribute to the originality of this thesis, obtaining these curriculums do provide a variety of beliefs and political patterns that may have revealed concepts of the state's official identity thereby reflecting the structures of mainstream state policy throughout the Cold War.

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<sup>861</sup> The Saudi curriculums are always changing and being evaluated in education, but I speak of those book that were used in the 1960s and 1970s for History and Monotheism. This is to see how communism was viewed in certain paradigms at the basis of the disciplines of these national curriculums.

My thesis has also been limited in at least one other way. I am aware that my study does not give the full picture of views inside Moscow, given that I could not pay a visit to Moscow and meet with a few political historians and officials, not to mention visiting the archives and libraries in Russia. But I have mentioned and cited a few Russians scholars who wrote their work in English about Saudi Arabia and obtained a few “primary source documents” that mentioned the views from Moscow. However, I consider my analysis of local, regional, political and religious actors sufficient to answer the main question of this study, of why and how Saudi Arabia from 1962-1975 dealt with the USSR. Hence, those factors mentioned above might be applicable to the policy streams of the whole of Saudi diplomatic history with the USSR that I have not covered in my thesis.

### **Epilogue: Fighting Communism Moved From The Balcony to The Barricades.**

The policy that King Faisal pursued from 1962-1975 revealed the main patterns dominating Saudi Arabia policy in the Cold War, which outlived Faisal himself, under the heading of fighting communism. This legacy was predicated on stirring the course of Saudi Arabia in subsequent years, spearheading anti-Communist waves across the region and beyond. The legacy was deep-seated anti-communism prevalent in other Arab countries. This not only had an impact on features of foreign policy in Muslim countries, but it also framed an identity-

building process factor of anti-communism, by referring to a potential confrontation with the enemy.

Accordingly, what Jacop Golberg summarized in his findings reiterated the relationship between the political and religious power in Saudi Arabia and its implications for the state foreign policy in the twentieth century. He claimed that that “the decline of Wahhabism and the ascendance of the al-Saud resulted not only in the diminishing importance of Wahhabism but also in the gradual weakening of Islam in general as a determinant in Saudi foreign policy force of the state since then.”<sup>862</sup> Conversely, this work proposes that the power of Islam was revived in the 1960s and 1970s and was “a key element” to political interactions in the format of state foreign policy.

As such, the main argument of my thesis is that throughout the Cold War Faisal shaped the narrow Saudi vision of Islam to manage the Cold War challenge towards Communism in a fundamental way. In other words, the antipathy to Communism facilitated and encouraged Saudi Arabian policy to encompass all threats during the 1950s and 1960s by empowering the strong message of Islam that somehow enveloped his policy and kept Saudi society isolated from the rest of the evil world. While this orientation could be considered intolerant in the 1960s, it became more fundamentally extreme at the end of the 1970s, ‘serving to promote a few Saudis’ core beliefs into encouraging and supporting the

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<sup>862</sup> Golldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia* (1986), 185.

actions of the Mujahidin in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation just four years after his assassination in 1975.’<sup>863</sup>

My work has also made two important findings with relevance to the study of Saudi Arabian foreign policy during the Cold War. First, fighting Communism in the Cold War strengthened and influenced Saudi-American relationships to the extent that these relationships crafted the foreign policy views of the successive Saudi leaders and deepened ‘mutual dependence.’ On the one hand, this came about due to profound American dependence on Saudi oil and its protection, on the other hand extreme Saudi vulnerability, and hence reliability, on American security since then. This input and output of the Cold War commonality leads me to the second point. King Faisal’s core policy towards Communism was precisely the building block for fighting Communism, which persisted after his assassination, whereby Saudi Arabia from the latter 1970s re-devised and re-developed methods “ideologically and financially” to bisect communism.

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<sup>863</sup> WikiLeaks reported, “At the time of his assassination the Soviet press tried to show a link between the assassination and the U.S interest and tacitly endorses the view Faisal’s death was the result of a politically inspired plot.” Wikileaks, US Embassy Moscow. 1975. “*Soviet Press hints U.S Interests Linked With Faisal Murder.*” Wikileaks Cable: 1975MOSCOW04251\_b. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975MOSCOW04251\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975MOSCOW04251_b.html). (Accessed 12 May 2016). This could be also seen as an existential opportunity of the Soviets, a time of leadership change, where they could seize the opportunity to form a necessary structural relationship with Riyadh. For a more American response look at the message from the State department to Moscow: Wikileaks Department of State Washington. 1975. “*Soviet Propaganda on King Faisal's assassination.*” Wikileaks Cable: 1975STATE072742\_b. At [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975STATE072742\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975STATE072742_b.html). (Accessed 14 May 2016).

The contention here is that the offensive nature of Saudi Arabian policy “that translated certain ideology into aggressive behavior” from the 1970s onwards managed somewhat to restrain Soviet influence in the Middle East, not just as a financier and supporter of any force against Communism, but with an anti-Communist stance framed culturally and educationally. This was due to promote the interests of the state and designed to create natural popular sentiments and ideological persuasion in the hearts and minds of Muslims, intertwined with outpouring of financial assistance that flowed rapidly.

Consequently, the homogeneous character of Saudi Arabian policy since the 1970s was to pour financial resources into the international and regional religious institutions created by King Faisal in the 1960s. As such, this policy constituted the expression of national goals, as anti-Communism resonated deeply with Saudis and were institutionalized systemically within Saudi Arabian and Muslim societies, contributing to a domestic political purpose.<sup>864</sup> As Raymond Hinnebusch argues, “Foreign policy in the Middle East states, ultimately rooted in state elites’ desire to defend their regimes, aims not just at deterrence of external threats, but also at legitimating the regime at home against domestic opposition and mobilizing economic resources abroad.”<sup>865</sup>

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<sup>864</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 21.

<sup>865</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, “Introduction: The Analytical Framework,” in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (London: Lynne Reiner, 2002), 15.

Even though the emphasis on the “Communist-Zionist Conspiracy” diminished and was less articulated after Faisal’s assassination, “the securitization of Islamic solidarity manifested itself in Saudi Arabia towards the end of the 1970s.”<sup>866</sup> To this end, the extreme anti-Soviet posture of Saudi Arabia started in the second half of the 1970s when “Saudi aid and influence were also being offered to anti-Soviet regimes in African countries, like Zaire and anti-Marxist Angolan forces under Jonas Savimbi.”<sup>867</sup> Therefore, they resisted growing communist influence wherever possible and avoided confrontation if a clash was inevitable, strengthening the defense of the Islamic world and assistance to any Muslim suffering. These were the main features of Faisal’s legacy in Saudi Arabia, “which became a prime move in inter-Arab politics and a major cornerstone of Arab politics and strategies for foreign policy behavior; with a clearly identified course of action.”<sup>868</sup> In a wider context, the Saudi attitude to the Soviet Union by the latter 1970s was the major foreign policy dilemma for the next two decades and had a tendency to quell the communist threat, the ultimate goal of Saudi policy in the twentieth century.

In the literature on framing contemporary Saudi political diplomatic history within the USSR and its activities, we found very little attention has been paid towards it. Despite the plurality of work on Saudi Arabian policy in the Cold War, I should delineate that much of the literature on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states in general towards the USSR and Russia remains underdeveloped in both theory and practice.

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<sup>866</sup> Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), 21.

<sup>867</sup> Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), 67.

<sup>868</sup> Hafiz, “Changes in Saudi Foreign policy.” (1980), 70.

There is a paucity of full-length scholarly work on Saudi foreign policy with the USSR during the Cold War, with previous scholarships on this topic perhaps not entering into deep discussion on the strategy of the USSR in the Gulf. Perhaps this is indicative of the extent of my argument in the first chapter; that very little research has been undertaken on understanding Saudi diplomatic history and other small Gulf States (Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman, Kuwait) in general on their policies and relationships with the USSR. However, there has been little advancement on the subject since 1979 and also since September 2001, but there are lapses that need to be answered and expanded upon from studies focusing on the Cold War context on political and economic topics.

To further understand the academic debate on the scope of this topic, it is therefore useful to take a closer look at how the concept of the communist threat perception changed dramatically from the late 1970s. Perhaps the most useful focus is the public undercurrents in society by a few scholars<sup>869</sup> on the fear of communism very much-influencing Saudi Arabia's relationships with the USSR towards the end of the twentieth century. This will be also useful to determine whether the pan-Islamism frame and classical Jihadist theories changed in response to geopolitical politics or as result of domestic developments. What did these observations imply for the academic crossroad on which pragmatism and ideology met?

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<sup>869</sup> On Saudi literature from the 1970s onward, see Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (2010), Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s* (1981), Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (2011), Alrasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State* (2007), Vassiliev, *The history of Saudi Arabia* (2000), Haykel & Hegghammer & Lacroix, *Saudi Arabia in transition* (2015), Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil* (2006).

Considering domestic politics and dynamics within the regime itself could be useful. Domestic politics always plays a central role in shaping the international policies of autocratic states and influences beyond its border.

Therefore, I suggest we pay adequate attention to social and local actors that shaped the political undertones of the regime itself and its interest. We also need to clearly distinguish between fighting Communism in the Gulf States and the U.S and how this affected their relationships with each other. Much more research still needs to be undertaken before we can come to a conclusion on why Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states started fighting Communism forcedly from 1979.

My chosen topic of Saudi Arabia under Faisal and the USSR (1962-1975) is only a small contribution towards these gaps, but I hope it will open doors to allow other researchers to explore important related topics. For example, to what extent was fighting Communism prior to 1979 designed to cause the minimum amount of unrest, aimed at minimizing internal threats to the regimes, not to restrain Soviet expansion globally? Here, I propose that one could pay adequate attention to fighting Communism, in particular, before the Iranian revolution of 1979. Previous studies have not addressed Saudi Arabian or Gulf states behavior in answering the question: Was the geopolitical reality of the Iranian regime change of 1979 part of a change of Saudi Arabian aggressive behavior towards Communism?



Did domestic Islamism extend to the international scene through Saudi foreign policy? And did Saudi Arabia have control over it? In addition, since all the small Gulf States were either colonized or had just become independent after the 1970s; did these changes affect their relationships with the USSR? Or did they have to follow Saudi Arabia? In some instances, did discussions on the influence of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf States internally, religiously and economically change the behavior of the Gulf States towards the USSR in the 1970s? Or did the notions of Arab nationalist movement in the entire Gulf challenge traditional Saudi politics of Islamic Diplomacy in the context of the Cold War? It is hoped that the combination of historical analysis, intellectual history alongside a grasp of the foreign policy components in this study will give students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills through the analysis of primary sources<sup>870</sup> and understand how the ideas of the secondary sources are crafted. It is hoped also to provide researchers with a guide for presenting diplomatic history to students through documents for those who are interested in learning about the USSR-Saudi Arabia relations during that era.

In evaluating King Faisal's policy towards the USSR in the development of Saudi foreign policy one can deduce that his legacy, deeply embedded in history and culture, had its essence in Saudi Arabian foreign policy until the end of the 20th

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<sup>870</sup> The recent release of documents and classified information in the archives "the U.S. and the U.K" could cover the lack of literatures on this topic and also help in devising different approaches on Saudi Arabia diplomatic history and foreign policy. That is not to say the domestic classified documents in Riyadh, in "King Abdul-Aziz Foundation" or "King Fahad library" cannot be helpful. By contrast, they are very valuable if declassified to incorporate circumstantial factors within the country. Jesse Ferris advocated the importance of using local primary sources to "counterbalance the tendency to rely on Western diplomatic documents". Ferris, *Egypt and the Cold War*, (2008), 13.

century and continued to be deeply embedded within the society and culture of Saudi Arabia.

Thus, even if Faisal did not witness the collapse of the USSR, it is possible that any Saudi king can use his doctrine again towards any leftist secularist regime forces or any non-religious movements. As such, it is difficult to predict a complete break within the policies forged in the 1960s, even if (the new king) inherits a foreign policy that is remarkably dissimilar to that bequeathed by Faisal's time.

## Bibliography

This bibliography includes all sources I have cited in my thesis. I arranged it alphabetically, ignoring diacritical marks but considering all forms of Arabic articles (al-, el, etc.). I also make a division between archive materials and books. A large number of books I cited are considered primary sources, which are the objects of my study. Secondary sources are also used to contribute to my interpretation, particularly studies on foreign policy analysis on Saudi Arabian political history. Other personal communications and interviews are indicated in the footnotes.

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