

The Uneasy “and Odd” U.S.- Saudi Alliance*

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Carrollton/Carroll County League of Women Voters
Carrollton Community Activities Center (Kiwanis Room)
7-9 PM
3/27/03
<http://adel.cs.westga.edu/leagueofwomenvoters/>

*Original title “The Uneasy U.S.-Saudi Alliance” by “David Morrison”, Freelance reporter, Washington, D.C.

The Players

- USA
 - Constitutional Republic
 - Secular State
 - Basic Freedoms
 - Friend of Israel
 - Saudi Arabia (SA)
 - Monarchy (the house of Saud)
 - Theocratic (Islamic/Wahhabi) state
 - Limited Freedoms
 - Foe of Israel
- Needed for domestic politics to insure control of the population.
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The Alliance

- Cozy & Secretive Alliance (both parties were happy with this arrangement for a long time)
- Mutual Recognition of Interest
 - Scratch my back & I will scratch yours
 - Stable oil production for security
- Economic
 - Oil
 - Military support
- Strategic
 - Insure the stability of region & house of Saud (even if not in the interest of the population or region)
 - Fight “common enemies”
 - Russia-Communism
 - Arab Nationalism (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, etc.)
 - Regional Conflicts (Iraq, Iran, etc.)
- Today’s house of Saud & SA are natural outcomes of this “alliance”

9/11

- Osama Bin Laden
 - “Citizen” of SA
 - The leader of Al Qaeda (religious & nationalist foundation)
 - Bin Laden family made fortune by alliance with the house of Saud
 - Cozy relationship with some members of the house of Saud
 - “Helped” by US & SA to fight the Russians in Afghanistan
 - “Helped” by SA to spread Wahhabism
- 15 out of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens
- US officials warned SA to cut off funds going to Al Qaeda
- SA public relation campaign to show itself as a reliable friend of the US
- US is unsure about what to do?

Views: US & SA

- Polls conducted in US after 9/11 show a negative views of SA
 - Why?
 - Support of terrorism
 - Spread of Wahhabism
 - Oil arrogance (Prince Talal when donating \$10 Million for the victims of 9/11)
- Polls conducted in SA after 9/11 show a negative views of US
 - Why?
 - Support of Israel
 - Unfair application of justice (e.g. Iraq vs. Israel)
 - Arrogance of power (might makes right)

Persistent Problems

- Saudi concerns
 - The question of Palestine
 - Saudis view the US unconditional support of Israel as a main obstacle to peace in the middle-east
 - “The Cardinal Sin”- Franklin D. Roosevelt’s promise to King Abdul Aziz (February 14, 1945- USS Quincy in the Suez Canal) *“that no decisions would be made regarding the matter without full consultation with Arab nations.”* Source: <http://www.internationalreports.com/middleeast/00/saudi-arabia/2.html>
 - King Faisal Oil Embargo of '73
 - US continues to ignore rights of Palestinians & Arab issues

Persistent Problems

- American concerns
 - Terrorism, 9/11 & before
 - Support of Palestinians authorities/Arafat
 - Saudi reluctance to appear as a strong supporter of US policies in the region
 - Lack of religious freedoms and political rights
 - Spread of Wahhabism throughout the region

Desert Storm

- American & Saudi interests converge
- US needed SA & SA needed US
- Oil-for-Security tacit
- Iraq & Arab Nationalism (nationalism is mixed with religion- Nationalism is the stronger of the two)
- US presence in the region & in SA

Oil & Blood

- “Blood is thicker than water, but oil is thicker than either”
- Economic & Strategic value of Oil & SA
- US troops to protect Oil
- US War for Oil
- US is willing to support SA for Oil

What of the Future?

- Borders/governments in the Middle-east are the creation of the west
 - England/France partitioning of the region (imperialism)
 - USA influence after World War II (neo-imperialism)
- The house of Saud?
 - Long-term stability
 - Lack of basic democratic reforms
 - Support/Spread of Wahhabism
 - Rights and Freedoms
- US Policies in the Middle east?
 - The Question of Palestine
 - Fair & balance policies
 - Long-term interest beyond Oil & Economics

Challenges

- Understanding the role of the US as the sole super-power
- Understanding the role of the US in the middle-east
- Understanding American values in practice
- Understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Understanding Arab nationalism
- Understanding Islam
- Understanding tribal & ancient cultures

Opportunities to Ponder

- What future considerations we might pursue in regard to dealing with SA & the middle-east?
- What foreign policy elements we might consider modifying/changing in the middle-east?
- What is the cost of the changes?
- What is the desired role of the US in the middle-east?
- How can such a role be pursued?

Discussion...