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Befriending Saudi Princes A High Price for a Dubious Alliance

by Doug Bandow

Executive Summary

Although the House of Saud, Saudi Arabia's royal family, has long leaned toward the West, it is a corrupt totalitarian regime at sharp variance with America's most cherished values. Despite the well-publicized ties between the two governments, Saudi Arabia has seldom aided, and often hamstrung, U.S. attempts to combat terrorism.

Even worse is Riyadh's willingness to buy off even the most unsavory regimes and groups. Both at home and abroad it supports the extreme Wahhabi form of Islam, a movement hostile to modernity and the West. Saudi money has even gone to the fundamentalist Pakistani academies known as madrassahs, which have served as recruiting grounds for Osama bin Laden.

American support for Riyadh is one of the prime factors motivating bin Laden, who seeks to drive the United States from what he sees as holy Muslim lands. Even if the United States succeeds in eliminating bin Laden, the presence of American troops will continue to inflame

Islamic extremists and encourage future terrorist attacks. Yet Washington hesitates to speak ill of its ally for one reason: oil.

The United States does not need to be deferential because of the oil issue. Although Riyadh possesses the globe's most abundant reserves, it currently provides only about 10 percent of production. In the short term, any supply disruption would cause fairly significant harm; the impact would be ameliorated in the long term, however, as new sources were found and the U.S. economy adapted.

The United States should reassess its relationship with Riyadh. Most important, Washington should withdraw its military forces from Saudi Arabia. That connection has already drawn Washington into one conventional war, against Iraq, and helped to make Americans targets of terrorism. Although America should not retreat from the world, it should stop supporting illegitimate and unpopular regimes where its vital interests are not involved, as in Saudi Arabia.

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Introduction

Nothing can justify the heinous terrorist attacks of September 11. Unfortunately, some U.S. policies have acted as the equivalent of poking hornet nests, turning Americans into targets for violence at home and abroad.

Demanding reconsideration, therefore, is the promiscuous foreign intervention that has helped generate not just abstract hatred but hostile passions intense enough to cause people to hijack airplanes and fly them into buildings full of innocent people. And one of the worst aspects of U.S. foreign policy has been the tendency to prop up “friendly” autocratic regimes. Among Washington’s more dubious allies is Saudi Arabia, a corrupt totalitarian regime at sharp variance with America’s most cherished values, including religious liberty.

The House of Saud has long leaned toward the West. Saudi Arabia grew out of the defeat in World War I of the Ottoman Empire, an ally of the Central Powers, at the hands of Great Britain and various subject Arab peoples. King Abdul al-Aziz al-Saud, who briefly fought against the Turks and then defeated the Hashemite Dynasty and allied Arab families to take control of the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula, proclaimed the modern Saudi Arabia in 1932. King Abdul al-Aziz, who fathered 44 sons before dying in 1953, was the fount of today’s royal family. His son, pro-American King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, suffered a series of strokes beginning in 1995, leaving another son, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, largely running the government.

Saudi Arabia would be unimportant to the United States but for the massive oil deposits sitting beneath its seemingly endless deserts. The advent of an activist Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, led by Saudi Arabia, which supported the oil embargo of 1973–74 against America, helped to raise oil prices and enrich the Saudi monarchy. Tensions with the West grew—for a time a few analysts even advocat-

ed invading the Persian Gulf region to seize the oil. The latest round of worrying about Saudi stability has led some people to recycle that idea.¹

However, in the post-World War II era, U.S. policymakers have focused primarily on defending the gulf region from other potential invaders—the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Islamic revolutionaries who seized control of Iran in 1979, and finally Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.² To deter Moscow, President Jimmy Carter created a rapid deployment force; to block Tehran, the Reagan administration aided Iraq in its bloody and lengthy war against Iran.

Finally, America went to war with Baghdad, with preservation of the House of Saud of far more concern than the liberation of Kuwait, the formal public goal. Washington easily defeated Iraq but left Saddam in power. Ten years of desultory UN weapons inspections, economic embargo, “no-fly zones,” and frequent U.S. bombing followed. America backed its military units in Turkey and carrier forces in the Persian Gulf with about 5,000 Air Force personnel in Saudi Arabia as part of the Southern Watch command, comprising aircraft ranging from F-15s and F-16s to C-130s and KC-135s. Another 1,300 military personnel and civilian contractors worked with the Saudi National Guard.³ No mere temporary response to Saddam’s aggression, America’s presence has a “permanent feel,” as Howard Schneider of the *Washington Post* put it.⁴

The Unsavory Saudi State

Although the relationship between Riyadh and Washington is close, it has rarely been easy.⁵ For American administrations that loudly promote democracy, the alliance with Saudi Arabia has been a deep embarrassment. Reports Human Rights Watch:

Freedom of expression and association were nonexistent rights, political parties and independent local

media were not permitted, and even peaceful anti-government activities remained virtually unthinkable. Infringements on privacy, institutionalized gender discrimination, harsh restrictions on the exercise of religious freedom, and the use of capital and corporal punishment were also major features of the kingdom's human rights record.⁶

Repression and Corruption

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, an almost medieval theocracy, with power concentrated in the hands of senior royalty and wealth concentrated among some 7,000 al-Saud princes (or more, by some estimates). Political opposition and even criticism are forbidden. In practice there are few procedural protections for anyone arrested or charged by the government; the semiautonomous religious police, or *Mutawaa'in*, also intimidate and detain citizens and foreigners alike. The government may invade homes and violate privacy whenever it chooses; travel is limited. Women are covered, cloistered, and confined, much as they were in Afghanistan under the Taliban.⁷

The Saudi regime's apologists, such as Abdulrahman al-Zamil, a member of the official 120-member Shoura (Advisory) Council, consider the lack of popular accountability a virtue, arguing that it ensures selection "unrelated to the influence of special interest groups and financial contributions."⁸ But ultimate control rests with the 75,000-man National Guard (run by the crown prince), which is as large as the army, not any group of advisers. Command positions are reserved for the royal family, which thereby strengthens its influence and creates further resentments. "Nobody climbs up into the higher ranks," one Saudi complained to the *Wall Street Journal*. "Those are reserved for the royal family."⁹

It is perhaps no surprise that such a regime has an unenviable reputation for corruption. Western business partners are occasionally imprisoned to resolve disputes. The problem is so great that the Saudi ambas-

sador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, has acknowledged tens of billions of dollars in abuse and theft.¹⁰ Indolence is even more widespread. For years, every college graduate could expect a government position that provided a good salary (and many tea breaks) for little work.¹¹ More than a quarter of Saudi Arabia's nearly 23 million people are expatriates, many of whom are domestic workers. During the Gulf War many Saudis expected others to do the dirty work of military combat, likening America's presence to hiring mercenaries.¹²

Religious Totalitarianism

Most ugly, though, is the religious totalitarianism enforced by Riyadh. Citizens and foreigners alike are prohibited from engaging in non-Muslim worship as well as proselytizing. According to former foreign service officer Tim Hunter, fired by the State Department for his criticism of its timidity in dealing with the Saudis, Christian clerics, if discovered, are arrested, beaten and brutalized, and eventually expelled from the country.¹³ Conversion means apostasy, which is punishable by death.¹⁴ Private devotion is theoretically allowed, but homes are raided if worshippers gather together. Christians have also been punished for blasphemy.¹⁵ In fact, in this regard Saudi Arabia follows much the same policy as the Taliban (which Riyadh recognized and funded until recently), which was assailed by President George W. Bush for prosecuting foreign aid workers accused of proselytizing.¹⁶

Thuggish behavior alone is rarely enough to preclude diplomatic relations, but it should discourage the United States from affirmatively embracing the Saudi regime, even in the name of stability.¹⁷ After all, repression is not the only path to security. Saudi Arabia's neighbor Kuwait has gained legitimacy by creating an elected legislature and considering giving women the vote; Bahrain plans on holding parliamentary elections in 2003, a move that, in the words of analyst Joseph Shattan, "appears to have seriously blunted the anti-American rage that is currently sweeping through the rest of the

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Arab world.”¹⁸ In fact, the quick dissipation of fundamentalist street protests during the war in Afghanistan would appear to offer a propitious moment for Arab governments to adopt political reforms. Those autocratic regimes should be strong enough to risk reaching for long-term stability through democratic means.¹⁹

U.S. policies have identified Washington with the Saudi kleptocracy. As Richard Perle of the American Enterprise Institute observes, “We are associated with regimes that are corrupt and illegitimate.”²⁰ Many average Saudis believe the United States is either serving as a pillar of the regime or taking advantage of its position to profit from the Gulf War. This has generated anger against America and support for sending home its troops, as well as the feeling that terrorism against the United States is legitimate. That phenomenon was evident after the bombing of the Khobar Towers military barracks in 1996 as well as after September 11, 2001.²¹

Americans are now paying for Washington’s cozy ties with Riyadh. That association has made the United States a target of terrorists. Obviously, one must take Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden’s pronouncements with some grains of salt, but ending American support for the corrupt regime in Riyadh and expelling U.S. forces from the Persian Gulf region appear to be his main goals.²² Since he lacks missiles, bombers, and carrier groups to achieve his end, he instead relies on terrorism.²³

Growing Internal Problems

The Saudi ruling elite is also paying for its repression and links to Washington, especially when contrasted with its formalistic Muslim piety. With 70 percent of government revenues (and 40 percent of gross domestic product) derived from oil sales, the drop in energy prices since the early 1980s has caused economic pain in Saudi Arabia; per capita GDP has dropped from \$28,600 in 1981 to less than \$7,000 today.²⁴ Unemployment is now estimated at 15 percent overall and 20 percent for those under 30.²⁵ That has

helped generate deep undertones of unrest, but the discontented feel helpless to promote political change. Criticism tends to be expressed through religious leaders. Novelist Abdelrahman Munif warns that the “situation produces a desperate citizenry, without a sense of dignity or belonging.”²⁶ Observes Neil MacFarquhar of the *New York Times* “In another country Mr. bin Laden might have become an opposition politician rather than a holy warrior. But Saudi Arabia brooks no dissent.”²⁷

Senior clerics live well on the government payroll and therefore lack credibility. Radical freelancers have developed a widespread following: 15 of the 19 hijackers of September 11 were from Saudi Arabia. And in January Riyadh acknowledged that about 100 of the 158 alleged al-Qaeda prisoners being held at Guantanamo Bay were Saudi citizens. One Saudi businessman told the *Wall Street Journal*: “Many young people are disgruntled and disenchanted with our society’s openness to the West and U.S. foreign policy. These people are frustrated and have nothing to do. They fall prey to people with agendas of their own. They are time bombs. They’re like the Japanese kamikazi.”²⁸ With roughly half of the population under the age of 15, the potential for further unrest is substantial.²⁹

Soaring dissatisfaction with the regime due to slumping revenues and a slowing economy has merged with criticism of America. Many Saudis are angry about U.S. support for the House of Saud; many students irrationally blame America for Saudi Arabia’s economic problems.³⁰ Additional irritants are Washington’s support of Israel and attacks on Iraq (paradoxically seen as anti-Muslim now, a decade after that nation’s defeat), and now the air strikes in Afghanistan. Admiration for bin Laden is evident even among those who dislike his austere Islamic vision.³¹ Worries Richard Murphy, a one-time U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia who is now with the Council on Foreign Relations, “After 11 years, we’ve worn out our welcome on the popular level, though not with the leadership.”³²

Saudi Obstructionism

The Saudi leadership has proved wary of aiding the United States despite direct attacks on Americans. The 1996 bomb attack on the Khobar Towers barracks in Dhahran killed 19 Americans and wounded another 372. It was the work of radical Islamists, who, like bin Laden, view Riyadh's alliance with America as a defilement of holy lands. However, U.S. efforts to investigate the bombing were hamstrung by the Saudis, who refused to turn over relevant information or to extradite any of the 13 Saudis indicted by an American grand jury.³³

In the same year, the Saudis refused, despite U.S. urging, to take custody of bin Laden from Sudan.³⁴ In 1998 bin Laden and several other extremist Muslim leaders issued a manifesto calling for a holy war to drive the United States from Islamic lands. Even so, U.S. officials were unable "to get anything at all from King Fahd" to challenge bin Laden's financial network, charges a new book by John O'Neill, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation official involved with counter-terrorism who died in the attack on the World Trade Center, where he was security chief.³⁵

Riyadh's reluctance to risk popular displeasure by identifying with Washington continues, even after the deaths of several thousand Americans on September 11. Observes Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum: "In 1979 when a group of extremists took over the Mecca Mosque, the Saudi regime called in French troops, infidels to go into Mecca and take it over. [In] 1990, when Saddam Hussein threatened, they called us in and we protected them. Now it's our turn to call. We're the ones who lost 5,000 dead. We need them, they've got to be there."³⁶

Privately, White House aides acknowledge that Saudi officials have not been as cooperative as hoped. Riyadh has refused to run "traces," involving background investigations, on its 15 citizens who committed the atrocities of September 11, supply passenger lists of those on flights to America, and block

terrorist funds flowing through supposed charities (if the money goes awry, the regime explains, it does so outside of Saudi Arabia).³⁷ Riyadh has also pressed, luckily without great success, non-OPEC nations to cut oil production in an attempt to raise prices to buttress the cartel of which it is the leading member.³⁸ It is no surprise, then, that Riyadh seemed to be one of the targets of the president's address to the UN General Assembly in which he called for moving from "sympathy" to "action."³⁹ Publicly, however, administration officials, including the president, laud Saudi cooperation.⁴⁰

The Saudis are, it is true, allowing use of the operations center at Prince Sultan Air Base, near Riyadh, but Saudi Arabia has joined its neighbors in attempting to keep its distance, ostentatiously announcing that no foreign troops would use Saudi facilities to stage attacks.⁴¹ One reason is concern about America's strong three-decade-long support for Israel.⁴² But more generally Riyadh fears identifying with the United States. By early November some Saudi officials were at least willing to blame the Taliban and not America for civilian casualties in Afghanistan, though the Saudis failed to join other governments in marking the three-month anniversary of the terrorist attacks.⁴³ Still, one anonymous official asked: "Does it matter what we are saying publicly?"⁴⁴ Unfortunately, just as cooperation with the West generates unrest, the refusal to aggressively defend cooperation with the West encourages extremist sentiments to grow.

Saudi Arabia: Terrorism's Enabler

The lack of a public endorsement pales in comparison with Riyadh's support for the very Islamic fundamentalism that threatens to consume the regime in Riyadh as well as to murder more Americans in future terrorist attacks. Al-Zamil criticized the United States for aiding Afghan guerrillas only in their fight against the Soviet Union, as if Washing-

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ton could have subsequently imposed order on a land rent by warring, fratricidal factions: “The Saudi volunteers, pure at heart and committed to high principles, could understand neither the opportunism nor pragmatism of US foreign policy.”⁴⁵ It is a curious criticism for a Saudi official, given the rank opportunism and pragmatism of Saudi policy. Al-Zamil himself admits that “the US military presence is very unpopular throughout Saudi society and is a liability rather than an asset,” raising questions about why U.S. military personnel are there—other than as pragmatic protection from Iraq and perhaps Iran.⁴⁶

As Neil MacFarquhar of the *New York Times* has observed, a recent charity telethon for Muslims “perfectly mirrored the government’s way of doing business: throw money at nasty problems and leave the unpleasant details under the rug.”⁴⁷ Riyadh’s strategy is to buy off everyone. It long subsidized Arab governments and guerrilla movements at war with Israel, and it opposed the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The regime was, along with Pakistan, the primary financial backer of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which provided sanctuary for bin Laden and his training camps.⁴⁸ It is widely believed that even Saudi businessmen unsympathetic to his goals have made contributions to bin Laden in an attempt to purchase protection. There are serious charges of financial support from some members of the Saudi royal family itself for bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network.⁴⁹

The problem runs even deeper. The Saudi state, run by royals who often flaunt their libertinism, enforces the extreme Wahhabi form of Islam at home and subsidizes its practice abroad. Wahhabism derives from the practices of a fundamentalist 18th-century tribal leader whose followers helped the Saudi royal family consolidate power in the early 1900s. The practice is thought to dominate as many as 80 percent of the mosques in America.⁵⁰ Within this sect, hostile to modernity, political extremism and support for terrorism have flourished in Saudi Arabia itself.⁵¹ Moreover, the threat now reaches beyond the Middle

East to Indonesia, Malaysia, and even the Philippines.⁵² Reports the *New York Times*, Riyadh “has also sponsored the fundamentalist academies known as madrassa in Pakistan. Many graduates of these madrassa have headed straight to Afghanistan, some to bin Laden training camps.”⁵³

In short, “these are SOBs who are barely even our SOBs,” complains *National Review* editor Rich Lowry.⁵⁴ By any normal assessment, Americans should care little if the House of Saud fell, as have other illegitimate monarchies such as Iran’s Peacock throne. Except for one thing: Saudi Arabia has oil. Saudi oil expert Nawaf Obaid worries that if Saudi Arabia fell to a fundamentalist revolution, the resulting government would be “ten times more powerful [than] Iraq or Iran.”⁵⁵

The Erroneous Oil Justification

Contrary to popular wisdom, the Saudis’ trump card is surprisingly weak. True, with 262 billion barrels in proven reserves, Saudi Arabia has about one-quarter of the world’s resources and 8.7 times America’s supplies.⁵⁶ Riyadh is not only the world’s leading supplier, but as a low-cost producer it can easily augment its daily exports, which were 9.1 million barrels a day last year.⁵⁷

However, the reserves figure vastly overstates the importance of Middle Eastern oil to the U.S. (and Western) economy. Saudi Arabia accounted for about 12.3 percent of global production in 2000 (and closer to 10 percent in 2001); Riyadh plus Kuwait and the various sheikdoms came to 21.3 percent; OPEC as a whole produced 41.5 percent of the world’s supplies.⁵⁸ By one estimate, zero Mideast production would push prices to \$76 a barrel.⁵⁹ The result in such a worst-case scenario would be severe economic pain in the short term, though the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which the president has vowed to fill, would help moderate prices.⁶⁰ With a 1 percent supply reduction estimated to influence a 10 percent price rise, zero

Saudi production would push prices to \$42 a barrel—a high but hardly catastrophic level. Moreover, the United States has survived high prices in the past: between 1974 and 1985, real gasoline prices ranged between 1.4 and 2.3 times current prices.⁶¹

The Myth of the Oil Weapon

Were the Saudi regime to fall, prices would rise substantially only if the conqueror, whether internal or external, kept the oil off the market. That would be true especially if the other states in the region did not also collapse.

Withholding oil would, however, defeat the very purpose of conquest, even for a fundamentalist regime. After all, the Iranian revolution did not cause Iran to stop exporting oil; in fact, production increased every year from 1990 to 1998 and rose again in 2000, almost returning to 1998 levels.⁶² In fact, even bin Laden has urged his followers via video-cassettes not to damage Saudi oil wells since oil is the source of Arab power.⁶³

If a new regime did halt sales, the primary beneficiaries would be other oil producers, who would likely increase exports in response to higher prices. A targeted boycott of only the United States would be ineffective, since oil is a uniform product available around the world.⁶⁴ In fact, the embargo of 1973–74 had little impact on production.⁶⁵ The global recession of 1975 caused a far more noticeable drop.

A new regime might decide to pump less oil in order to raise prices. Such a strategy would require international cooperation, yet the oil producers have long found it difficult to coordinate price hikes and limit cheating on agreed-upon quotas.⁶⁶ Even if effective, restricting sales would have only a limited impact. A decade ago, when oil was selling for about \$20 a barrel, David R. Henderson, former senior energy economist with President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers and now with the Hoover Institution, calculated that the worst result of an Iraqi seizure of the Saudi oil fields would be about a 50 percent price increase, which would cost the U.S. econ-

omy about one-half of 1 percent of GDP.⁶⁷ Prices were running in the mid-\$20s in 2001 but have since fallen to below \$20 a barrel because of the slumping economy. Thus, a price hike of a similar magnitude today would be lower in real terms and would fall on an economy more than one-quarter larger.

In any case, the economic impact would decline over time. Countries such as Kuwait, Iran, Nigeria, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates have the ability to pump significantly more oil than they are currently producing.⁶⁸ An eventual resolution of the conflict with Iraq would bring substantial new supplies online; Baghdad pumped 2.2 million barrels a day in 1990, before becoming subject to sanctions after the end of the Gulf War.⁶⁹ As economist Susan Lee puts it, should Riyadh turn off the pumps, "the U.S. would find itself plenty of new best friends."⁷⁰

Sharply higher prices would bring forth new energy supplies elsewhere. Total proven world oil reserves were 660 billion barrels in 1980, 1,009 billion in 1990, and 1,046 billion at the end of 2000. Yet in the last decade alone the world's people consumed 250 billion barrels of oil.⁷¹ How could this be? A combination of new discoveries and technological advances increased the amount of economically recoverable oil. Reserves rose even as oil prices dropped: between 1980 and 1990 proven oil reserves jumped by 62 percent while prices for Middle Eastern petroleum were falling 43 percent. Prices eventually hit a dramatic low in 1998, down another 41 percent, before rising over the next two years.⁷²

America's Oil Options

America is dotted with high-production-cost wells that could be unplugged. The nation's outer continental shelf alone is thought to contain more than current proven reserves; since so little of the outer continental shelf, barely 6 percent, has been leased, those resources have not been proved.⁷³ Some 15,000 acres of the 19.6 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge could contain a similar amount of oil (as well as supplies of natural gas). Even the modest estimate of 5 billion bar-

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rels of recoverable reserves would be a significant addition to current supplies. However, we won't know how much is there without drilling, which could be conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner.⁷⁴ And, although some people might think the desire to lower the cost of gasoline an inadequate reason to develop those supplies, the prospect of terrorism and war related to America's access to Persian Gulf oil should change the cost/benefit ratio considerably.⁷⁵

Further, some 300 billion barrels of unrecovered oil, 10 times our proven reserves and more than known Saudi resources, lie in beds of shale under the United States.⁷⁶ They are not counted, however, because they are not currently worth developing. But as prices rise and new techniques are developed, they may become economically recoverable. Moreover, energy companies are looking for new oil deposits around the world, including in the Caspian Basin, Russia, and West Africa. Estimates of as yet undiscovered potentially recoverable oil range from 1 trillion to 6 trillion barrels. The Energy Information Administration estimates that, at current consumption rates, we have enough oil for another 230 years and that "unconventional" sources, such as shale, could last 580 years.⁷⁷ And even those figures are based on existing prices and technologies. Higher prices would stimulate exploration, as well as production of alternative fuels and conservation, reducing oil consumption.

In short, an unfriendly Saudi Arabia might hurt America's pocketbook; it would not threaten America's survival. Different would be the ascension of a truly terrorist regime, one dedicated to using oil revenues to undertake a campaign against the United States. That is unlikely, however, if for no other reason than that Washington's campaign against Afghanistan demonstrates that in such a case the new ruling elites would not long remain the new ruling elites. (Control of the gulf region by a hegemonic rival, notably the Soviet Union, would have posed a significantly different, and greater, security threat, but that prospect disappeared with the end of the Cold War.)⁷⁸

Although in an unlikely worst case (the loss of most Persian Gulf oil) the cost hike might be significant, that risk must be balanced against the annual cost of maintaining forces to protect Saudi oil, estimated at \$50 billion.⁷⁹ On top of that come the costs of fighting terrorism, exacerbated by U.S. support for Saudi Arabia. The war in Afghanistan costs at least a billion dollars a month.⁸⁰ And then there are the likely civilian casualties from future attacks should the war on terrorism fail, or prove only partially successful.

Severing the Tie

Mentioning Saudi Arabia's shortcomings or suggesting that the regime's survival is not vital to America makes policymakers in Washington and Riyadh nervous. In particular, the House of Saud doesn't take criticism well. Crown Prince Abdullah denounced the U.S. media in a speech on state television, charging that they were damaging his nation's reputation and driving a wedge between his government and Washington. In the *Arab News* he blamed the American media campaign for expressing "its hatred toward the Islamic system."⁸¹ His government diplomatically suggested that Riyadh's problems were with the press, not the Bush administration.⁸² (In mid-November the Saudi government bought a four-page advertisement in leading newspapers extolling the accomplishments of King Fahd, "a doyen of world statesmen.")⁸³

In fact, there are rumors that policymakers in Riyadh, worried about domestic criticism of their ties to Washington, are considering ending America's military presence.⁸⁴ That has naturally been denied by Saudi and U.S. officials alike, but serious tensions obviously remain.⁸⁵ In his letter to President Bush, Crown Prince Abdullah wrote, "It is time for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to look at their separate interests."⁸⁶ Al-Zamil suggested that "Saudi Arabia might well find it necessary to reassess its 70-year special relationship with the United States," including pulling its students out of American universities, with-

drawing financial investments from the United States, and “playing a different role within OPEC.”⁸⁷ Those are empty threats, however: America would not notice the departure of Saudi university students; arbitrarily pulling out investments would hurt Saudi Arabia more than America. Moreover, even in the aftermath of September 11 Riyadh was lobbying non-OPEC oil producers to cut production, to America’s detriment. The House of Saud sets, and will continue to set, oil production on the basis of Saudi, not American, interests.

Washington Should Take the Initiative

The country that should reassess the current Washington-Riyadh axis is the United States. Observes *Boston Globe* columnist Jeff Jacoby: “For years the United States has had an arrangement with Saudi Arabia’s rulers: They would sell us oil and we would pretend to not notice that they were intolerant dictators who crushed dissent at home while nurturing some of the world’s most violent fanatics abroad. But now we are at war with those fanatics and the old bargain cannot continue.”⁸⁸ Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.) has broken with the Washington consensus to make much the same point. The American commitment to the Saudi royal family is a moral blemish and a practical danger. It has already drawn the United States into one conventional war and has helped make Americans targets of terrorism, which generated far more casualties in one day than did the Gulf War, Kosovo conflict, and Afghanistan campaign (so far) combined.

The most important reason to withdraw U.S. troops is to eliminate a source of antagonism that has fostered the sort of virulent terrorism seen on September 11. Nevertheless, Washington can ill afford to cite that as its justification, and it cannot pull out precipitously, lest the lesson learned abroad is that the way to change American foreign policy is to slaughter innocent Americans. However, the United States has ample reason to make such a change on other, public

grounds: Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian regime that has simultaneously fostered terrorism abroad and undercut long-term stability at home. The survival of the House of Saud should be left to it.

Saudi Arabia’s oil is important, but who sells it to America is not. Indeed, though stability in the Persian Gulf is of value, the benefits of America’s presence are not so obvious. It is not clear that America’s presence increases Saudi stability. Certainly the royal family will do whatever it takes to maintain its power and privileges against internal opposition. As analyst Simon Henderson puts it, “The House of Saud will be ruthless in preserving itself.”⁸⁹ If that ruthlessness is insufficient, the American presence is not likely to help, unless the United States is prepared to commit ground forces—in addition to those presently on station—to prop up the monarchy, creating the prospect of a lengthy occupation and increased terrorist activity.

Of greater concern is the possibility of renewed external aggression, most obviously by Iraq, though it remains in greatly weakened condition. But even before September 11 the Gulf States were working to resolve conflicts and improve their ability to defend themselves without Washington’s help.⁹⁰ Saudi Arabia spends more on its military than do Iran and Iraq combined; the Gulf Cooperation Council, made up of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, has a larger population than Iraq but has yet to field a comparable military. The prospect of American disengagement would, like the prospect of a hanging, help concentrate the mind. Such a prospect would also increase pressure on the Gulf States to forge defensive relationships with surrounding powers, most notably Iran, Syria, and Turkey, and to inaugurate serious political reform to generate a popular willingness to defend the incumbent regimes.

Good Riddance

If it fails to act, however, the United States shouldn’t worry unduly about the future of the Saudi regime. As *National Review’s* Lowry

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observes, "Dealing with these allies will require more cold-bloodedness and calculation than the U.S. has been capable of since the height of the Cold War."⁹¹ Although Lowry opposes withdrawal of U.S. troops, that is the logical result of cold-blooded analysis. Badgering the Saudis to be more cooperative and to democratize, as has been proposed, is unlikely to succeed, since they would have done so already if they thought it was in their interest.⁹² Expanding America's military, going to war, and risking civilian casualties as a result of terrorism in order to defend Riyadh costs far more than stability in the gulf region is worth. Forcibly ousting the House of Saud and imposing a puppet regime, whatever such a strategy's apparent short-term virtues, would further entangle the United States in a virulent, hate-filled region made even more volatile by America's action.⁹³ The hysterical international reaction, by friend and foe alike, can easily be imagined.

Should the House of Saud fall or be overrun, Washington would finally be relieved of the moral dead weight of defending that regime. And consumers would almost certainly continue to purchase sufficient oil, if not directly from a hostile Saudi regime, then from other producers in a marketplace that would remain global. Americans would adjust to any higher prices by finding new supplies, developing alternative energy forms, and reducing consumption.

There were many causes of the September 11 atrocity. Some, such as America's status as a free society whose influence permeates the globe, reflect the country's very being and cannot and should not be changed. But some U.S. positions—such as Washington's willingness to make common cause with the morally decrepit, theocratic monarchy in Riyadh—would be of only dubious benefit even if they did not put Americans at risk. The United States must not retreat from the world. But it should stop intervening militarily and supporting illegitimate and unpopular regimes where its vital interests are not involved, as in Saudi Arabia.

Notes

1. One analyst would take it from the House of Saud; the other would take it if the House of Saud fell. See, respectively, Irwin Stelzer, "Can We Do without Saudi Oil?" *Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2001, p. 31; and Ralph Peters, "In Praise of Instability," *Wall Street Journal*, November 1, 2001, p. A20. While there would be few reasons to shed tears for the dispossessed princes in such an event, the excesses of the House of Saud provide an inadequate justification for a war of conquest. Moreover, the execution of such a strategy would prove difficult: one Saudi official promised to "turn the oilfields into infernos to end foreign occupation" if Washington invaded. Abdulrahman al-Zamil, "Blackmail and Threats Not Calculated to Strengthen Ties between States," *Arab News*, November 9, 2001, www.arabnews.com.

2. U.S. involvement in the region has been extensive and predates World War II. See generally Sheldon Richman, "'Ancient History': U.S. Conduct in the Middle East since World War II and the Folly of Intervention," Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 159, August 16, 1991.

3. Julie Kosterlitz, "Troops and Consequences," *National Journal*, November 3, 2001, online edition.

4. Howard Schneider, "In the Arabian Desert, U.S. Troops Settle In," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2001, p. A1.

5. The Saudis have long spent generously on lobbying to smooth the rough spots. Ken Silverstein, "Saudis and Americans: Friends in Need," *Nation*, December 3, 2001, pp. 18–20.

6. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001), www.hrw.org.

7. See, for example, Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: A Secret State of Suffering," March 27, 2001, www.amnesty.org; and the U.S. Department of State's annual *Human Rights Report*, www.state.gov. New York's Freedom House awards Saudi Arabia failing grades for both political rights and civil liberties. Adrian Karatnycky, ed., *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties: 2000–2001* (New York: Freedom House, 2001), pp. 466–69. The Saudi regime makes a pretense of respecting human rights within an Islamic context by, for example, respecting religious liberty. See, for example, "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention: Initial Report of Saudi Arabia due in 1998," United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, March 29, 2000, CRC/C/61/61/Add.2.

8. Al-Zamil. Senior Saudi officials blivate about tailoring political reform to their traditional culture. See, for example, Jim Hoagland, "The True Cost of Oil," *Washington Post*, November 25, 2001, p. B7; and Douglas Jehl, "Saudi Sees No Bin Laden-Iraq Link," *New York Times*, November 22, 2001, p. B5. That, of course, means the House of Saud retains political control at all costs. Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia," Report 2001, December 2000, www.amnesty.org.
9. Quoted in James Dorsey, "An Improbable Terrorist behind Sept. 11," *Wall Street Journal*, November 8, 2001, p. A21.
10. Lowell Bergman and Tim Weiner, "Saudi Arabia Also a Target of Attacks, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, October 9, 2001, p. B4.
11. See, for example, Neil MacFarquhar, "No Jerry Lewis, but Saudi Telethon Reaches Goal," *New York Times*, November 9, 2001, p. A4.
12. Movement for Islamic Reform in Saudi Arabia, "The Rise and Evolution of the Modern Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia," chap. 5, www.miraserve.com.
13. "U.S. Kneels to Saudi Demands," *ICC Concern*, April 1996, pp. 3-4; and Doug Bandow, "State Department Forgets Human Rights," *Detroit News*, September 29, 1995, p. 11A.
14. Karatnycky, p. 468.
15. Julia Duin, "Christians Face Dismal Plight in Islamic Realms," *Washington Times*, November 6, 2001, p. A20.
16. In fact, President George W. Bush initially demanded their release as one condition to forestall U.S. bombing. Bush said, "Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned." Quoted in "Bush Issues Ultimatum to Taliban, Calls upon Nation and World to Unite and Destroy Terrorism," *CQ Weekly*, September 22, 2001, p. 2227.
17. The Saudi ruling class distinguishes itself from Iran's shah, a modernizing thug, by its commitment to traditional Islam. See, for example, Elaine Sciolino, "U.S. Pondering Saudis' Vulnerability," *New York Times*, November 4, 2001, p. B4.
18. Joseph Shattan, "Whatever Saudis Want . . .," National Review Online, October 26, 2001, www.nationalreview.com. More generally, see Douglas Jehl, "Democracy; Uneasy Steps in Islamic World," *New York Times*, November 23, 2001, pp. A1, A10.
19. See Fareed Zakaria, "Let's Spread the Good Cheer," *Newsweek*, November 26, 2001, p. 50.
20. Quoted in Kosterlitz.
21. See, for example, Douglas Jehl, "Saudi Heartland Is Seething with Rage at Rulers and U.S.," *New York Times*, November 5, 1996, www.nytimes.com; and various articles listed by the Movement for Islamic Reform in Saudi Arabia, www.miraserve.com.
22. See, for example, "Mujahid Osama Bin Laden on al-Saud Betrayal of Palestine," www.ummah.org.uk; Douglas Frantz and David Rohde, "How Bin Laden and Taliban Forged Jihad Ties," *New York Times*, November 22, 2001, pp. B1, B3; Robert Worth, "The Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Terror," *New York Times*, October 13, 2001, pp. A13, A15; John Kifner, "America's Muslim Allies: A Time of Trial," *New York Times*, October 10, 2001, p. B4; Lisa Beyer, "Osama's Endgame," *Time*, October 7, 2001, www.time.com; "America Struck by God Almighty," MSNBC, October 7, 2001, www.msnbc.com; Yaroslav Trofimov, "Hijackers' Saudi Identities, Real and Fake, Raise Uncomfortable Questions," *Wall Street Journal*, September 25, 2001, p. A14; Lisa Beyer, "The Most Wanted Man in the World," *Time*, September 16, 2001, www.time.com; Martin Walker, "Analysis: Bin Laden's Fatwa," United Press International, September 16, 2001, www.upi.com; David Plotz, "What Does Osama Bin Laden Want?" *Slate*, September 13, 2001, www.slate.msn.com; and Jehl, "Saudi Heartland Is Seething with Rage at Rulers and U.S." Materials found in abandoned al-Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan also demonstrated his focus on Saudi Arabia. John Pomfret, "Bin Laden's Fortress: War and Domesticity," *Washington Post*, December 13, 2001, pp. A1, A17; and Keith Richburg, "Bin Laden, Bombs and Buddhas," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2001, pp. A1, A35.
23. His objectives seem to be quite ambitious, given not only his hatred of Israel but also his activities in Chechnya and Central Asia.
24. "Saudi Arabia's Future Stability Questionable," Stratfor Commentary, April 28, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
25. The situation is likely to worsen, with the government projecting a \$12 billion deficit in 2002. "Saudi Stability on Borrowed Time," Stratfor Commentary, December 12, 2001, www.stratfor.com.
26. Quoted in Tariq Ali, "The Real Muslim Extremists," *New Statesman*, October 1, 2001, www.newstatesman.com.

27. Neil MacFarquhar, "Bin Laden's Wildfire Threatens Saudi Rulers," *New York Times*, November 6, 2001, p. B4.
28. Quoted in James Dorsey, "In This New World, Who Is the Saudi?" *Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 2001, p. A13. See also Mamoun Fandy, "Discontent Is Rising among Saudi Oil Generation," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 1994, p. 19.
29. Among the September 11 hijackers were seemingly normal, middle-class Saudi men, such as 29-year-old Hani Hassan Hanjour. See Dorsey, "An Improbable Terrorist behind Sept. 11," pp. A16, A21.
30. See James Dorsey, "In U.S.-Led War, Young Saudis See the Seeds of Chaos," *Wall Street Journal*, October 23, 2001, pp. A18, A21.
31. Neil MacFarquhar, "Saudi Dilemma: A Native Son, A Heinous Act," *New York Times*, October 5, 2001, pp. A1, B3.
32. Quoted in Kosterlitz.
33. See, for example, "Second Thoughts on Two Islamic States," *The Economist*, November 10, 2001, pp. 19-20; Karen DeYoung, "Saudis Seethe over Media Reports on Anti-Terror Effort," *Washington Post*, November 6, 2001, p. A16; and Dan Eggen, "U.S. Trials Unlikely for Khobar Suspects," *Washington Post*, June 23, 2001, p. A22.
34. Barton Gellman, "Sudan's Offer to Arrest Militant Fell Through after Saudis Said No," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2001, p. A1. Riyadh now claims it rejected the offer because Sudan demanded that bin Laden not be prosecuted. Scott Macleod, "The Near Misses," *Time*, November 19, 2001, p. 57. The claim seems implausible, but it is impossible to prove or disprove.
35. Quoted in Ethan Bronner, "Oil Diplomacy Muddled U.S. Pursuit of bin Laden, New Book Contends," *New York Times*, November 12, 2001, p. B6. Similar claims have been made elsewhere. See, for example, Greg Palast and David Pallister, "FBI Claims Bin Laden Inquiry Was Frustrated," *Guardian*, November 7, 2001, www.guardian.co.uk.
36. Daniel Pipes, "Profile: Alliance of Convenience, Saudi Arabia," ABC News *Nightline*, November 8, 2001, transcript, www.DanielPipes.org.
37. See, for example, Douglas Jehl, "Saudis Balk at Request on Accounts," *New York Times*, November 27, 2001, pp. B1, B6; Thomas Omestad, "The Kingdom and the Power," *U.S. News & World Report*, November 5, 2001, pp. 34-35; Elaine Sciolino and Neil MacFarquhar, "Naming of Hijackers as Saudis May Further Erode Ties to U.S.," *New York Times*, October 25, 2001, www.nyt.com; Seymour Hersh, "King's Ransom: How Vulnerable Are the Saudi Royals?" *New Yorker*, October 22, 2001, www.newyorker.com; Lindsey Hilsum, "With Friends Like the Saudis," *New Statesman*, October 22, 2001, www.newstatesman.com; Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Bullets of Saudi Gold," *Washington Times*, October 22, 2001, p. A18; Jeffrey Gettleman, "In Arab World, Palestinian Plight Eclipses Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 2001, www.latimes.com; "Target Terrorism," interview with Richard Murphy and Daniel Pipes, CNN *Crossfire*, October 18, 2001, transcript, www.cnn.com; Jane Perlez, "Saudi Cooperation on bin Laden Lags, U.S. Aides Say," *New York Times*, October 11, 2001, p. B5; DeYoung, p. A16; and "Reconsidering Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, October 14, 2001, p. WK12. Saudi cooperation appears to be better in some areas than in others. See Evan Thomas and Christopher Dickey, "The Saudi Game," *Newsweek*, November 19, 2001, pp. 34-35.
38. Lynne Kiesling, "Non-OPEC Oil Producers Change the Dynamics of Oil Markets," Reason Public Policy Institute, November 8, 2001, www.rppi.org.
39. Quoted in Elizabeth Bumiller, "Bush Chides Some Members of Coalition for Inaction in War against Terrorism," *New York Times*, November 10, 2001, p. B4.
40. See, for example, Ben Barber, "Powell Praises Aid in Fighting Terror," *Washington Times*, November 8, 2001, p. A15; and DeYoung, pp. A1, A16. U.S. officials are almost certainly nervous about voicing criticism in light of the byzantine political struggles currently afflicting the Saudi monarchy. Simon Henderson, "Saudi Arabia: Friend or Foe?" *Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2001, p. A18.
41. See, for example, Yaroslav Trofimov, "Gulf States Deny Roles in U.S. Campaign," *Wall Street Journal*, November 8, 2001, p. A21; and Adnan Malik, "Saudi Says Bases Can't Be Used against Muslims," *Washington Times*, October 1, 2001, p. A14. One American official explained that the Saudis "will allow us to do most things, but with a lot of winking." Quoted in Howard Schneider, "Ending Doubts, Saudis to Allow U.S. to Use Base," *Washington Post*, September 28, 2001, p. A24.
42. See, for example, Elaine Sciolino and Patrick Tyler, "Saudi Charges Bush with Failure to Broker Mideast Peace," *New York Times*, November 9,

2001, p. A10. The issue also flared when a Saudi prince offered to donate \$10 million to New York City's Twin Towers Fund, only to have the check rejected by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani when the prince issued a press release criticizing U.S. policy toward Israel. Neil MacFarquhar, "Saudi Sheik Regrets Giuliani Turned Down His Donation," *New York Times*, October 13, 2001, p. B4.

43. Douglas Jehl, "Silence, On a Day to Remember the Attacks, Says Much," *New York Times*, December 13, 2001, p. B4.

44. Quoted in Omestad, p. 35.

45. Al-Zamil.

46. *Ibid.*

47. MacFarquhar, "No Jerry Lewis, But Saudi Telethon Reaches Goal."

48. See, for example, Neela Banerjee, "The High, Hidden Cost of Saudi Arabian Oil," *New York Times*, October 21, 2001, p. WK3.

49. See, for example, David Wurmser, "The Saudi Connection," *Weekly Standard*, October 29, 2001, pp. 15–17; Nick Fielding, "Dissent in the Dynasty: Bin Laden's Sister Implicates Arab Royals," *Sunday Times* (London), October 28, 2001, www.sunday-times.co.uk. The connections were official and public before he turned terrorist. Yosef Bodansky, *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (New York: Prima Publishing, 2001). Saudi Arabia also backed the Taliban even as it gave Bin Laden sanctuary. Howard Schneider, "Saudi Missteps Helped Bin Laden Gain Power," *Washington Post*, October 15, 2001, pp. A1, A11.

50. Larry Witham, "Strict Wahhabism: A Split Branch or Islamic Diversity?" *Washington Times*, October 11, 2001, p. A15. See also Blaine Harden, "Saudis Seek to Add U.S. Muslims to Their Sect," *New York Times*, October 20, 2001, pp. A1, B9.

51. Howard Schneider, "For Many in Saudi Arabia, A Fundamental Conflict," *Washington Post*, November 8, 2001, p. A15. More generally, see Stephen Schwartz, "Liberation, Not Containment," *National Review*, November 19, 2001, pp. 25–27; Stephen Schwartz, "Seeking Moderation," *National Review Online*, October 25, 2001, www.nationalreview.com; Neil MacFarquhar, "Anti-Western and Extremist Views Pervade Saudi Schools," *New York Times*, October 19, 2001, pp. B1, B3; and Neil MacFarquhar, "Bin Laden Adheres to Austere Form of Islam," *New York Times*, October 7, 2001, www.nytimes.com. The Saudis naturally dismiss any connection. Thomas

and Dickey, pp. 38–39.

52. See, for example, Martin Sieff, "Saudi, US Chickens Come Home to Roost," *United Press International*, November 5, 2001, www.upi.com; Fareed Zakaria, "The Allies Who Made Our Foes," *Newsweek*, October 1, 2001, p. 34; and Stephen Schwartz, "Ground Zero and the Saudi Connection," *Spectator*, September 27, 2001, www.spectator.co.uk.

53. "Reconsidering Saudi Arabia," p. WK12. See also Thomas Friedman, "In Pakistan, It's Jihad 101," *New York Times*, November 13, 2001, p. A25; and Peter Fritsch, "Religious Schools in Pakistan Fill Void—And Spawn Warriors," *Wall Street Journal*, October 2, 2001, pp. A1, A14.

54. Rich Lowry, "Our SOBs," *National Review Online*, October 1, 2001, www.nationalreview.com.

55. Quoted in Daniel Fisher and Lynn Cook, "The Prize," *Forbes*, November 12, 2001, p. 64.

56. British Petroleum, *Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2001, p. 4.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Jerry Taylor and Peter VanDoren, "Oil Weapon Myth," *National Review Online*, December 6, 2001, www.nationalreview.com. Another estimate is \$90 per barrel in the very short term and \$45–\$60 per barrel in the short term but less over time. See, for example, Susan Lee, "We Can Live without Saudi Oil," *Wall Street Journal*, November 13, 2001, p. A22.

60. *Ibid.*

61. William Anderson, "Uncle Sam's Energy Mess," *Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation Study no. 5*, March 2001, p. 8.

62. British Petroleum, p. 7.

63. David Ignatius, "The Psyche of a Bin Laden," *Washington Post*, October 28, 2001, p. B7.

64. Jerry Taylor, "No Matter What, the Oil Will Flow," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2001, p. B15.

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66. See, for example, Lynne Kiesling, "Russia: When a Cut Is Not a Cut," *Stratfor Commentary*, December 5, 2001, www.Stratfor.com; Michael Wines and Sabrina Tavernise, "Russian Oil Production Still Soars, For Better and Worse," *New York Times*, November 21, 2001, p. A3; Jeanne

- Whalen, "Mexico Fails to Coax Russia to Cut Exports," *Wall Street Journal*, November 20, 2001, p. A3; Sabrina Tavernise and Neela Banerjee, "Oil Prices Tumble to a 2-Year Low," *New York Times*, November 16, 2001, pp. A1, C2; Thadeus Herrick and Bhusan Bahree, "OPEC Won't Curb Oil until Others Do," *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2001, pp. A2, A28; Neela Banerjee and Sabrina Tavernise, "Oil Prices in Flux As OPEC Decides against Cut in Output," *New York Times*, November 15, 2001, pp. C1, C12; Bruce Stanley "OPEC to Conditionally Cut Output," Associated Press, November 14, 2001; Jeanne Whalen and Bhushan Bahree, "Russia's Cut in Oil Production Disappoints OPEC," *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 2001, pp. A2, A24; Andrew Higgins, Jeanne Whalen, and Bhushan Bahree, "Russia Bucks OPEC Pressure to Curtail Oil Output," *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 2001, pp. A3, A4; "Asia, Middle East Face Off over Oil Premiums," Stratfor Commentary, November 12, 2001, www.stratfor.com; "OPEC's Woes Continue," Stratfor Commentary, October 29, 2001, www.stratfor.com; "OPEC Unable to Drive Prices Up," Stratfor Commentary, October 8, 2001, www.stratfor.com; and "Russia to Spurn OPEC's Advances," Stratfor Commentary, September 28, 2001, www.stratfor.com.
67. David Henderson, "Do We Need to Go to War for Oil?" Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 4, October 24, 1990, p. 3.
68. Susan Lee. International oil companies are investing tens of billions of dollars to develop new oil fields. See, for example, David Armstrong, "An Oilman's Last Hurrah," *Forbes*, December 24, 2001, pp. 112-13; and Benjamin Fulford, "Energy's Eastern Front," *Forbes*, December 24, 2001, pp. 60-62.
69. See generally "Iraq: Refusal to Export Oil Will Hurt OPEC," Stratfor Commentary, June 5, 2001, www.stratfor.com.
70. Susan Lee.
71. British Petroleum, pp. 7, 10.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
73. Doug Bandow, "The Myth of Iraq's Oil Stranglehold," in *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, ed. Micah Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York: Times Books, 1991), p. 220. Current estimates of economically recoverable resources range from 26.6 billion barrels at a price of \$18 a barrel to 46.7 billion barrels at \$30 per barrel. U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, "Outer Continental Shelf Petroleum Assessment, 2000," p. 5, www.mms.gov. Estimates of total conventionally recoverable oil run up to 88.3 billion barrels.
74. See, for example, Taylor, "No Matter What, the Oil Will Flow"; Doug Bandow, "Do As I Say . . . Not As I Do," *Washington Times*, July 11, 2001, p. A15; Dwight Lee, "To Drill or Not to Drill," *Independent Review* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 217-26; and Jessica Gavora, "North to Alaska . . . Not," National Review Online, September 26, 2001, www.nationalreview.com.
75. Such an argument is made by Charles Krauthammer, "War and the Polar Bear," *Washington Post*, November 9, 2001, p. A37; and Spencer Abraham, "Drill ANWR Now," *Wall Street Journal*, November 8, 2001, p. A24.
76. Bandow, "The Myth of Iraq's Oil Stranglehold," p. 220.
77. Jerry Taylor, "No Need to Panic over Oil Prices," National Review Online, September 14, 2001, www.nationalreview.com. Almost since the discovery of oil, people have been predicting imminent exhaustion of the resource and staggering price hikes—and have consistently been wrong.
78. Barbara Conry, "America's Misguided Policy of Dual Containment in the Persian Gulf," Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 33, November 10, 1994, p. 2.
79. Ivan Eland, *Putting "Defense" Back into U.S. Defense Policy: Rethinking Security in the Post-Cold War World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), p. 31; and Earl C. Ravenal, *Designing Defense for a New World Order: The Military Budget in 1992 and Beyond* (Washington: Cato Institute, 1991), p. 51.
80. James Dao, "U.S. to Spend \$1 Billion a Month on Afghan War," *New York Times*, November 12, 2001, pp. A1, B5.
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82. See, for example, Jim Hoagland, "On a Precipice with the Saudis," *Washington Post*, November 11, 2001, p. B7.
83. The advertisement, "The Quiet Diplomat," appeared in the *Washington Post*, November 13, 2001, p. A19, and the *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2001, p. A15.
84. "Saudis Consider Asking U.S. Military to Leave," Middle East Newline, October 18, 2001, www.menewline.com.
85. See, for example, Philip Bennett and Steve Coll, "Prince Reaffirms Saudi-U.S. Alliance," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2002, pp. A1, A15; and "Powell Says U.S. Forces in Gulf for Long Term,"

Reuters, January 20, 2002.

86. Quoted in Stelzer, p. 28.

87. Al-Zamil.

88. Jeff Jacoby, "Friendship and the House of Saud," *Boston Globe*, November 18, 2001, www.bostonglobe.com.

89. Simon Henderson. A former British ambassador has observed, "The division in Saudi Arabia is not between a repressive or liberal regime, it is between a repressive regime and one even more repressive." Quoted in James Buchan, "The House of Saud Falls on Hard Times," *Australian Financial Review* (Sydney), November 2, 2001, p. 7. Much ruthlessness might be required, given the rumblings of discontent even within the security forces. See, for example, "Southwest Saudi Arabia: Hot Bed of Radical Islam," Stratfor Commentary, October 23, 2001, www.stratfor.com. Another pessimistic assessment comes from Tony Blankley, "Arabian Storm Rising," *Washington Times*, November 14, 2001, p. A17.

90. See, for example, Andrew Borowiec, "Arab Gulf States Seek Joint Security," *Washington Times*, May 9, 2001, p. A12.

91. Lowry, "Our SOBs."

92. See, for example, Thomas Friedman, "Dear Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, December 12, 2001, p. A31; and Michael Elliott, "Time for an Honest Talk," *Time*, November 19, 2001, p. 59.

93. Some analysts have suggested coercing the Saudis if they refuse to cooperate in combating terrorism, aid in an attack on Iraq, or reform themselves. A few hawks appear ready to make Riyadh a target, after Afghanistan and Iraq, no matter what it does. See, for example, "Next Year in Baghdad," *National Review*, December 17, 2001, p. 16; "Eloquence and Force," *National Review*, December 3, 2001, p. 12; Rich Lowry, "Your Cooperation, or Else," *National Review Online*, November 27, 2001, www.nationalreview.com; Steve Sailer, "Analysis: Conquer Saudi Arabia before Iraq?" *United Press International*, November 7, 2001, www.upi.com; and Rich Lowry, "Quagmire Time?" *National Review Online*, November 1, 2001, www.nationalreview.com. The strategy of moderate coercion, which can be used only once, appears to be to freeze Saudi assets. Stephen Schwartz, "Liberation, Not Containment," *National Review*, November 19, 2001, p. 27.

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