CHAPTER II

Islam and Saudi Foreign Policy
Foreign policy reflects the components of a nation's history and all its circumstances, political philosophies, and its physical potential. Conceptually, the objective sought by the foreign policy of any nation can be divided into many categories, such as self-preservation, security, prestige, and power. There are, of course, general and/or minimal objectives. Beyond them a nation's foreign policy seeks to formulate and achieve its aims in accordance with historical aspirations.

Hence, the making of foreign policy is influenced by the legacy of the past. Whether among policy-makers or the broad masses in general, history helps to shape the images of what foreign policy is and what it could be. The historical factor guides men's imaginations as to what tasks any present or future foreign policy could accomplish, what persons and institutions should accomplish them, and by what methods. People turn to history for answers to their basic questions: "Who are we?," and "What do others expect of us?," and "What do we expect of ourselves?" in all countries, history thus fashions expectations: it influences the interplay between foreign policy and the ongoing process of national self-perception and self-definition.

Furthermore, a nation's history produces stereotypes of behaviour and attitudes which common experience sanctifies and which are transmitted from generation to generation. These stereotypes consist of national likes and dislikes, do's and don'ts. All these are the consequences of the natural and social environment and of the political atmosphere which has historically prevailed.

They are also the result of the physical and political geography of the country and its role in regional and international politics.

Thus, this chapter will endeavour to analyze the Islamic dimension in the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. It begins by discussing the role of Islam in the political history of the country, then explains its impact upon the political, economic, and social systems in Saudi Arabia.

Islam and Political History of Saudi Arabia

During the early period of Islam and particularly during the time of the Prophet and his immediate caliphs, the Arabian Peninsula attained a high degree of stability and order. However, the political centre of Islam soon moved from the Peninsula to Damascus and then to Baghdad. From that time until the emergence of Al-Saud (The House of Saud), the Peninsula remained isolated from the social and political changes taking place in other parts of the world. The society disintegrated and the social structure broke down under the stress of bitter rivalries. Superstition increased and the principles and teachings of Islam which had governed the society and had held it together weakened.2

Nevertheless, the Arabian Peninsula was able to reassert itself and religion once again played the crucial role in this process. One of the decisive factors in this development was the birth in the middle of the eighteenth century of a religious reformist movement, commonly and erroneously referred to as

Wahhabism. 3

The movement was initiated by Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahab, who was born in 1703 (A.H. 1115) in Uyainah, a small town in Wadi Hanifa in Najd. The Shaikh, as he became known, argued the basic propositions of the movement and his followers have proceeded according to his teachings.

The study of jurisprudence, the teaching of Islam, the pronouncements and opinions of Imam Ibn Hanbal and his disciple Ibn Taymiyyah were among the things which occupied the mind of the Shaikh. He believed that a return to Islam and its moral code was the only means to review the community. He advocated that the Islamic faith which had elevated the Ummah to such a high position twelve centuries earlier was still capable of raising its standards. Accordingly, he preached that true Islam should be sought at its pure source: the Quran and the Hadith (recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad). In this, the Shaikh was deeply influenced by the Hanbalite school of jurisprudence. 4

---------------

3. The name "Wahhabism" was given to the movement by its opponents after the name of its founder, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, as a mark of abuse and it was freely used by European writers, travellers, and diplomats. Adherents of the movement called themselves Unitarians (Muwahhidun), or Brethren (Ikhwan).

4. Based on different interpretations of the Shariah, four major schools of jurisprudence developed in the second and third Islamic centuries (ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era). These were: the Malekite, founded by Malik Ibn Anas (718-796), the Hanafite, founded by Abu Hanifa (699-767), the Shafi'ite, founded by al-Shafi'i (772-826), and the Hanbalite, founded by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855). The differences between these four madhabs (school of thought) were not fundamental but were based on the degree of emphasis laid on the various sources of the Shariah.
Although, the present state of Saudi Arabia was established in 1901, its history could be traced back to the year 1744, when Muhammad Al-Saud and the Shaikh entered into an unwritten covenant. Al-Saud agreed to devote his sword to the cause of Islam and the Shaikh accepted to guide him along with the right path. The Saudi monarchy has thus evolved out of tribal moorings, graduated through a rigorous Islamic discipline and emerged as the head of a political entity. In this way a link could be established between the classical theory of international relations in Islam and the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, since Saudi rulers from Muhammad Bin Saud in the 18th century to the present king were products of and influence by these perceptis and their public behaviour could be construed to have been formed by the Hanbalite school as interpreted by Ibn Taymiyyah in the thirteenth century and by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab in the eighteenth century.

In essence the reformist movement was puritanical, vigorous, and simple. Its message was straightforward: a return to classical Islam. The movement's evolution, its doctrinal perspective, and its significance from the political point of view were reminiscent of early Islam. This is of great importance, because it indicates the rebirth or continuation, after a long period of stagnation, of the theory and practice of the Muslim state of the early period of Islam.

Since there is no separation of church and state in Islam, its history has been marked from the beginning by waves of religious enthusiasm, most immediately seen in political effects and results. Riding on one of these waves,

the combined political forces of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud and religious forces of Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahab marked not only the beginning of the rule of the House of Saud in the middle of the eighteenth century, but also a change in the course of Arabian affairs. The association between the House of Saud and the reformist movement of Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahab manifested itself during the three phases through which the history of both the House of Saud and the Muwahhidun movement passed.

The first phase began approximately with the years 1744-1745 when Muhammad Ibn Saud, the Amir of Diriyah in Najd, agreed to accept the religious revival of the Shaikh as his ideology and to be its political arm. The alliance between the two marked the foundation of a new state which spread gradually, as a result of both popular appeal and military force, through the central parts of the Peninsula but was almost unnoticed by the world at large until the early years of the nineteenth century, when the control of the new Saudi state began to expand into other parts of the Peninsula. By 1806 Saudi forces had extended their control to most of the Arabian Peninsula, including Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz, and parts of Iraq and Syria.

... The rise of the Saudi state was so rapid and adherence to the revival movement so compelling that one can speculate how far it might have expanded had it not met the


superior military technology of its external opponents. 8

The occupation of Mecca and Medina by the Muwahhidun in A.D. 1803-1804 had alarmed the Ottoman Sultan, who ordered the viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to deal with the situation personally and crush the movement. Muhammad Ali personally appeared on the scene and attacked them in the interior desert regions. Thereafter Muhammad Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, at the end of a series of campaigns, succeeded in entering the Saudi capital Diriyah and taking the next ruling Amir, Abdullah, a prisoner, sending him to Constantinople where he was beheaded by the order of the Sultan. 9 At that point it appeared for a time that the reformist movement was crushed once and for all. However, as Van der Meulen put it, "the spirit of the movement could not be extinguished with material weapons and would again emerge from the desert when it found for itself a new leader." 10

The second phase dates from 1818 until the end of the nineteenth century and was marked by a steep political recession of the Muwahhidun, coupled with a wider diffusion of their doctrine outside of Arabia. The undisputed control of the holy cities by the Muwahhidun from 1806 to 1812 brought the new reform movement to the direct notice of the whole Muslim world. Their puritanism


spurred the zeal and enthusiasm of many scholars and encouraged, directly or indirectly, many religious leaders to start similar revivalist movements in different parts of the Muslim world. As a result, religious revivalism in different forms became the most conspicuous phenomenon of the nineteenth-century Islam. The political recession of the Muwahhidun was thus greatly compensated by this ideological expansion.\textsuperscript{11}

The most prominent Amir to rule in the second phase was Imam Faisal Ibn Turki, whose reign was not only by far the most important in this phase but also one of the most important in the history of the House of Saud. His two reigns gave form and coherence to the dynasty from the time of Muhammad Ali's invasion of Arabia until the consolidation of power by Faisal's grandson, Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud. Faisal's sons were destined to lose -- and much more. Farsighted enough to realize that he could not again bring ruin on his people and himself, the Imam Faisal played a lower bid. He was a devout Wahabi, but, instead of attacking Karbala, he received a British diplomat in his capital.

The third stage in the history of Al-Saud began in 1902 when King Abdul-Aziz (reigned 1902-1953) captured Riyadh and began to expand his domain in the Peninsula. King Abdul-Aziz was the real founder and nation-builder of contemporary Saudi Arabia. It is not intended here to elaborate on the history of the foundation of the Kingdom. Suffice it to say that Abdul-Aziz began with nothing in 1901, and left behind him a vast kingdom whose area is as big as the combined areas of Germany, France, Italy, and  

\textsuperscript{11} Some of those movements were the Fara'iz movement in Bengal and the Paduri movement in Indonesia. See Khan, p. 39.
Switzerland. The question is: What had enabled Abdul-Aziz to achieve this great success?

Reading the history and biography of King Abdul-Aziz, it becomes clear that in addition to his personal characteristics which enable him to accomplish his goals he was also a man of faith, whose ambition was controlled by his reason and limited by its possibilities. From the beginning, he hoped to establish a great nation where security, order and Islamic principles would prevail. Yet he stayed within the limits of possibility. He did not allow his ambition to advance beyond what the circumstances permitted. In fact, this is one of the secrets of his success in unifying the Arabian Peninsula.

Another reason for King Abdul-Aziz' great success was the establishment of agricultural settlements for the Bedouins. He believed that there was no way to subdue the Bedouins, to get them to obey and follow orders, to overcome their excessive individualism and their tendency to rebel, except by encouraging them to adopt sedentary life in agricultural settlements, where he hoped they would acquire discipline and accept the concept of law and order in the community. Abdul-Aziz built for them the Hijars and called them to settle on the land and cultivate it. He was able to make this great achievement a nucleus of the great endeavor which followed it-- that of building a nation.

12. The Hijars are villages built for the Bedouins around sources of water in which they settle in order to change their nomadic and pastoral life to that of agriculture and settlement. In fact, the process could be viewed as an exodus from the society of the tribe to that of the nation.

Through all these accomplishments, Abdul-Aziz was motivated and guided by his strong religious convictions. It can be assumed, as Philby suggested:

... that the idea of another Wahhabi revival had for some time been germinating in Ibn Saud's (King Abdul-Aziz) mind as an important instrument of policy. He had however grafted a new conception of the normal type of such revivals, and had made a special point of concentrating the efforts of his missionaries on the Badawin tribes, with results which began to be apparent in 1912.¹⁴

It was obvious, therefore, that King Abdul-Aziz' ideas and concepts of nation-building, development and, ultimately, foreign policy were influenced to a large extent by Islam and Islamic principles. There was an apparent blend of Abdul-Aziz' role as the undisputed leader of the Peninsula and his aim of safeguarding and promoting Islamic ideas. Bakor Kashmeeri believes that King Abdul-Aziz' charismatic leadership was instrumental in the resurgence of the Muwahhidun movement. In his words:

Wahhabism was a belief system that needed a leader. Ibn Saud was that leader. His

accomplishments made the movement what it developed into; yet, in saying this, we need to quickly add that the relationship between the two was mutually beneficial. This is to say that Ibn Saud succeeded in taking over the entire region because he had at his command the services of a cadre of Wahhabi revivalists who were ready to spill blood at any time in the name of advancing Islam.\footnote{15

King Abdul-Aziz died in 1953 and was immediately succeeded by his eldest son, Saud Ibn Abdul-Aziz. King Saud ruled for eleven years. In 1964, the Royal Family and religious leaders chose his brother Faisal to succeed him. In November of that year, Faisal Ibn Abdul-Aziz was proclaimed King of Saudi Arabia and Imam of the Muslims.

The Impact of Islam on the Saudi System

To appreciate the course of Saudi history, the direction of the nation's economic development with its social and psychological effects, and the role of the country in international politics, it is imperative to gain understanding of the role which Islam plays in Saudi Arabia.\footnote{16
mosaic and fully understanding the role and importance of Islam, it would be extremely difficult to explain how the Saudis perceive the world: What is the impact of Islamic perceptions on development, energy, and the related issues? What is the impact on the decision-making process in Saudi Arabia? What influence does Islam have on the behaviour of the country in international relations?

Islam is the religion of all the citizens of Saudi Arabia. It has a pervasive influence on the lives of its adherents, being the fundamental motivation force in most phases of their culture. It is no exaggeration to state that "the Saudis' perception of politics, ethics, law, and society—indeed their view of the world, is indelibly and inescapably molded by Islam."17

The primacy of Islam is strengthened by the country's association with the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the presence of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. Furthermore, the Arabian Peninsula is the heartland of the Arab people, in whose history the greatest event was the advent of Islam, which gave to their lives a new and profound meaning.

However, the political centre of the rapidly expanding Islamic Empire quickly moved from its birthplace in Mecca to Damascus and Baghdad in the Fertile Crescent. Mecca remained, as it has to the present day, the religious center of Islam, but its political importance rapidly declined, and until recently the Arabian Peninsula remained isolated from the social and political changes taking place in other parts of the world. The unity it had experienced under the Prophet Muhammad disintegrated and its society deteriorated into a congeries of

warring tribes and independent town. Only Mecca and the Red Sea coastal area of the Hijaz had any contact with the outside world: Mecca as the goal of Muslim pilgrims from all over the Muslim world and the Hijaz as a result of its subjection after the sixteenth century by the Ottoman Empire.  

The situation was changed with the emergence of King Abdul-Aziz and his successful attempt to consolidate and unify most of the Arabian Peninsula into one modern nation which was based on a religious reformist movement.

Because of this association of the area with the birth and development of Islam and the role it has been playing ever since, it is natural that Islam exercises an intense and permeating influence over the lives of the inhabitants of the country. This influence is not confined to religious aspects alone; it also encompasses all other human endeavors -- political, social, and economic.

Islam is the unifying force around which Saudi Arabia's political, legal, and religious system have been created. The central institution of Islamic civilization was, and still is, the Shariah, which is concerned with all of man's activities, from the most private to the most public. In Saudi Arabia, the constitution and the formal legal system are based directly on the Shariah.

Because there is no separation of Church and State in Saudi Arabia, the chief of state derives his authority from being simultaneously the Imam (the spiritual leader of the faithful and protector of the Holy places), and the Malik.

In his capacity as King and Imam, the chief of state is responsible for safeguarding the practice of Islam throughout the community and assuring the full adherence to the prescription of the Shariah. Furthermore, interpretation of the law is carried out under the guidance of the Ulama (religious scholars) who are recognized as the highest authority in legal matters. The Ulama have had strong influences, particularly in the legal and educational spheres, and have been a conservative force in the interpretation of the Quran and other legal sources. Although the Ulama do not exercise any role in the execution of foreign policy, there is an unsubstantiated tendency to view them as an interest group which has an indirect influence on the formulation of foreign policy.

The influence of Islam on the political process in Saudi Arabia can also be illustrated by the functioning of a venerable Islamic institution known as Ahl-al-Hal wa-al-Aqd (The People who Bind and Loose). In Saudi Arabia, this institution consists of the royal family, leading Ulama and government leaders. In 1964, it was the deliberation of this institution that caused the deposition of king Saud in favour of his brother, the crown prince. The withdrawal of support by ahl al-hal-wa al-Aqd was sanctified and announced by a fatwa. Islamic legal opinion.


21. For a discussion of the role which the Ulama played during the early years of King Abdul-Aziz' reign see Kashmeeri, p. 168.

22. Long, op.cit., p.27.
In the economic sphere the impact of Islam is also noticeable. From the time of his accession to the throne, King Faisal attempted to acquire for the people the material benefits of modern technology while maintaining the purity of Islamic society. During his reign, Faisal stood firmly in favour of further modernisation, as long as he felt that Islam was not being fundamentally undermined. As a matter of fact, this consideration was, and still is, one of the main preoccupations of policy-makers and economist in Saudi Arabia. The challenge is how to develop, modernize, and introduce foreign technology while maintaining and strengthening the indigenous traditions and values created and nurtured by Islam. This is not to suggest that the Islamic precepts are antithetical to the principles of modern technology, economic development, and modernization. Recent Saudi experience in this field has shown the compatibility of the Islamic principles with those of modern technology. For example, the strains upon the social fabric of the nation which are being imposed by urbanization, industrialisation, and other facets of modernisation are countered by reinforcing the foundations of the community with the ideological cement of Islam. Hence, the success in building a modern state on a largely theocratic basis and subsequently in formulating and executing a foreign policy capable of achieving the desired objectives is determined by the extent to which the country succeeds in making the economic and social programs compatible with Islam and in transmitting the ethical standards of the faith to the bureaucracy, the military, and the intelligentsia.

However, modernization means technological skills, industrial diversification, and a large trained labour force. This is in turn requires not only a major influx of foreign technicians and experts, but also because Saudi Arabia is underpopulated, a supplementary labour force recruitment from other parts of the world. These requirements confront the policy-makers with enormous problems. For this new situation subjects the country to different concepts and ideas. Accordingly, the modernisation process is based on the fact that the change must not be too abrupt, that the economic and social programs must be compatible with Islam, and that Islamic values must be maintained and strengthened in order to protect the society and to smooth out the transition.24

-------------------

24. On November 6, 1962, Faisal issued a ten-point programme of reform which could be summed up as follow:

1. While reconfirming ;the state's adherence to Islamic law, it promised to issue a basic law (a constitution) and set up a consultative council.

2. It pledges enactment of provincial regulations that would establish local governments.

3. It proclaimed independence of the judiciary and promised to establish a supreme judicial council and a ministry of justice.

4. It announced that the above-mentioned judicial council would be composed of 20 members chosen from both the lay jurists and the Ulama.

5. It promised to spread Islamic teachings and defend Islam in word and deed.

6. It proclaimed the reform of the committees of public morality.

7. It proclaimed the government's solicitude for social matters and education and pledged control of retail prices, establishment of scholarships for students, social security regulations, a law protecting labourers from unemployment, and provision of innocent means of recreation for all citizens.
That is why in the recruitment of foreign labour force, those persons having Islam as their religion are preferred by Saudis. In the advertisements the recruiting agencies clearly use to mention that only Muslims are wanted.

Economic development and modernization of Saudi Arabia began in 1960's with the then prince Faisal's reform programme. The country embarked on a five-year development plan in 1970, and a second five-year plan in 1975. To maintain the religious and moral values of Islam was one of fundamental principles which guided the second five-year plan.

Saudi Arabia's foreign aid programme in the 1970's permitted a more assertive and active foreign policy then was possible in the 1960's before the impact of oil on its economy. Islamic ideology not only served as an instrument of foreign policy but continuously reinforced the authority of the House of Saud as the upholder of Islamic values.

One may indeed struck by the prevalence of Islamic symbols in social

-----------------------

...Continued...

8. It announced the intention to regulate economics and commercial activities through appropriate legislation which would assure progress, economic expansion, and encouragement of capital investment.

9. It pledged sustained endeavor to develop the country's resources and economy, in particular, roads, water resources, heavy and light industry, self-sufficient agriculture.

10. It abolished slavery in the kingdom.

values, political culture, state apparatus, and leadership declaration in Saudi Arabia. Does domestic Islamism extend to the international scene through Saudi foreign policy? If so, to what degree, and in what form.

This question touches on one of the basic debates in foreign policy analysis: the importance of ideology or religion versus national interest in determining a country's foreign policy.

In Saudi Arabia the locus of foreign policy decision-making is not only limited to the foreign ministry. The decision-making process has the following characteristics.25

First, there is an organic link between domestic and foreign policies because of historical legacy of the state. As a result, foreign policy decision-making is not limited to the ministry of defence, oil, or the head of intelligence, but includes other members of elite (the royal family or religious establishment) whose primary concern is also domestic. Second, although the power of the Al-Saud family is paramount, other groups do participate and wield differing degrees of influence depending on the issue area. For instance, in the field of relations with foreign Islamic groups, the role of the ulema is substantial.

Due to its historical legacy, Saudi Arabia considers itself the guardian of Islam and Islamic values throughout the world. Islam is more than a religion, it is a way of life in the kingdom. Islam is not the only determinant of Saudi

policy, whether domestic or foreign, but it is paramount. As a result, the Ulema's influence is all-pervasive. They participate directly in decision-making, but more importantly, they shape the social values and the frame of reference of those who judge issues, determine political priorities, degree legal practices, and interpret behavioural results. The view of the Ulema are at the basis of the social fabric and the regime's legitimacy. They constitute and even called Ahl al-hal wa Al-aqd", the final arbiters and definitive decision-makers. The Ulema's direct influence in decision-making follows three important channels;

1. Direct and privileged access to the highest locus of decision-making
2. monopoly over some ministries and areas of policy, and
3. popular mobilisation.

Through wahabism, the religions establishment was a partner in both the establishment and management of the Saudi State. The Al-Shaikh family of Abdul Wahab enjoyed continuous prestige and intermarried with the Al-Saud family. Even prominent Ulama who were not members of the Al-Shaikh family enjoyed influence for Abdul Aziz permitted them direct access to the Majlis, the council that directed the state's affairs. In addition, the Ulema had a regular weekly meeting with the king on Thursday afternoon, during which views were exchanged and policy coordinated. Traditionally the religious establishment has monopolized the Ministries of Education, Justice, Pilgrimage affairs, and Awqaf (religious endowments), the Department of Missionary Activities,


Religious Research and Ifta (verdicts); and the Committee for Commanding the good and Forbidding the Evil. The influence and activities of these institutions far exceed that of their secular counterparts.

Through the regular Friday sermon, usually well attended, the Ulema have a public forum to question or support not only religious issues, but also social values and political and economic practices. As a result, their views on Arab and Muslim affairs are very influential. Historically, the Ulema have arbitrated intra-elite conflicts. In 1958, when conflict raged within the Royal family the Ulema's pressure was crucial in allowing Faisal to take Saud's place. When Faisal himself was assassinated in 1975, the designation of Khaled as his successor had to be approved by the Ulema.

Saudi foreign policy had been a reflection of the evolving realities of domestic, regional and international politics since it was established as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 by late King Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud). Prior to the 1960's Saudi Arabia did not develop an active foreign policy in its own right either at the regional or international levels. The discovery of oil in 1938 with its accompanying revenues, provided an economic base for contemporary 'power', along with Islam as an ideology of the state. This become dramatically more evident of the government in 1964. Under Faisal's leadership, Saudi Arabia began its emergence as the leader of the Arab and Muslim world.


Three important facts account for the importance of Saudi Arabia in the global arena. The first and most important is her influential position as an Islamic center which attracts over 600 million Muslim followers from around the world. Islam provides not only a simple, direct and comprehensive central core of belief, but also an extensive, all inclusive body of instruction about how the believer should think, live and act. The often heard description of Islam as a way of life is quite internally true in Saudi Arabia. The second is Saudi Arabia's strategic location between the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf which borders a number of small, weak Arab oil sheikhdams. The third fact is that Saudi Arabia controls immense oil resources in the world; 27 percent of the world's proven oil reserve is located here.

In the case of Saudi Arabia's domestic politics, skillful adaptation of Islamic values tended to reinforce the authority of the House of Saud within the centralization policies of the state. There is close relationship religiously, ideologically and culturally between Islam, and Kingdom's foreign policy. It has often been argued by official spokesman that Islam is the pillar of Saudi foreign policy.

------------------


In general, for analytical purposes, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy can be divided into three major phases conforming to differing power configurations in the West Asia: (1) dynastic alliances (1932-56); (2) Arab Cold War (1956-67); (3) aid and oil politics (i.e. 'petro-dollarism') (196-75). Associated with each of these phases are elements of an Islamic policy\(^\text{35}\) (a) Wahhabi religious idealism, (b) anti-radical ideological confrontation and (c) ideological and cultural resurgence (combining features of (i) and (ii) above. In this way to a large extent the Islamic factor determine the guidelines of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy.

Saudi Arabia was created on the wave of Wahhabi religious revival in 1932. In the process, Wahhabi tribesmen occupied close to 75 percent of the Arabian peninsula (Jazirat al-Arab) until they were checked on the frontiers by the British in Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Aden, and the Italians in the Yemen.\(^\text{36}\) Despite their incessant desire for Jihad, the Wahhabis were compelled to come to terms with their religious enemies. As a backward kingdom with limited economic resources and military capabilities and defence compelled king Abdul-Aziz to enter into treaties of Islamic friendship and co-operation in the mid-1930s with Egypt, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Kuwait and the Yemen. Essentially he sought to create a balance of power him to remain independent of the big powers as well as neutral in the contact of big-power rivalry. Indirect relations with Germany, Japan—even the US—were designed to Counter British and Italian

\(^{35}\) Ranald R., Mac Intyre's, "Saudi Arabia" in Ayoob Mohammed's ed., \textit{The politics of Islamic Reassertion} (New Delhi; Vikash Publishing House, 1982)p.19

influence on the Kingdom's frontiers. Abdal-Aziz's Clandestine military support for the Palestinians during the Uprising of 1936-9 was tempered by the need to avoid antagonising the British mandatory authorities in Palestine. In the 1940s Hashimite (ruling dynasties of Iraq and Tarns-Jordan) ambitions for expansion in the Fertile Crescent led to moves for a countervailing alliance with King Farooque of Egypt. Together they undermined the unionist elements in Arab League Charter (1945) as a counter to the Hashimite ambitions, which were believe to be closely related to British imperialist interests in the region. The level of conscious and Islamic religious considerations in Saudi Arabia policy during this period can be seen in her various moves. At the UN Saudi Showed maximum solidarity with Arab and Islamic States, especially in opposition to the partition resolution on Palestine (November 1947) which brought Israel into existence. The Islamic factor may be discerned which also provided a theoretical basis for opposition to the Zionist State.

The parameters of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy during the 1956-67 period were based on an ideological rejection of radicalism in the form of Arab revolutionary nationalism, socialism or communism. Islam as an element in Saudi foreign policy also serves as an ideological defence of internal and external security interests. Being a member of the non-aligned movement Saudi Arabia sought to fuse perceptions of neutrality with Islamic solidarity as a

37. Lackner Helen, op. cit, p.19
39. Lackner Helen, op.cit, p.115.
counter to great-power involvement in the Islamic world. The notion that Islam might serve as a 'third force' to capitalism and communism was a constant theme in Islamic conferences during the 1950s. Yet differing ideological perceptions of Islam—indeed rivalries between self-professed Islamic neutralists—undermined Islamic solidarity.

In the absence of Islamic ideological unity, Riyadh fashioned a new series of alliances during the 1950s and 1960s as a counter to radicalism. Apart from a period of brief tactical relation with Egypt under Nasser and with Syria in 1955-6, Riyadh's inclination was to move out of the orbit of militant Arab nationalism by fashioning alliances with its previous dynastic rivals—the Hashimite rulers of Jordan and Iraq. This sharpened the ideological rift in the Arab world, which was intensified with the over-throw of the Iraqi monarchy in July 1958, the break up of the United Arab Republic in 1961, and the outbreak of Yemeni Civil war in September 1962. The outcome of this civil war on Saudi Arabia's backdoor was of crucial importance to Riyadh.

President Nasser was no less anxious to spread the revolutionary ideals of his National charter (1962) to the Yemen and indeed to the Arabian peninsula as a whole.

The Yemeni civil war brought into focus the differing ideological applications of Islam in the policy objectives of the rival states. During the late 1950s and early 1960s Nasser had focussed on the reformist aspects of Islam

---


which he identified with Arabism and the liberation of Societies oppressed by capitalism and reactionary Islam, namely Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Nasser believed that the ideals of the National Charter were in Conformity with the principles of the Sharia, Which sanctions social co-operation and prohibits all kinds of material exploitation of one group by another. The Egyptian military presence in the Yemen was designed to secure a republican regime, permitting the transmission of revolutionary ideals throughout the Gulf. But in Saudi Arabia, the fundamentalist perception of Islam rejected Cairo's revolutionary Islamic Synthesis.

Ideologically there was no room for compromise while both sides hold to rigid dogmatic positions. Muslims entered the battle against Muslims in the Yemeni civil war with Cairo allied to the republicans and Riyadh to the Royalists. King Faisal, meanwhile inclined towards an Islamic alliance to counter Nasser Pan-Arabism and radicalism. During 1966 Faisal tried to convene a meeting of Islamic leaders at Mecca at the end of the hajj to denounce godless socialism and isolate Egypt and Syria within the Islamic world. To this Nasser's reply was: Hilf al-Islam hilf al-istislam (the Islamic alliance is the alliance of capitulation).

Before 1967, the six day war, the Islamic alliance failed to get off the ground. Tension along the frontiers with Israel in November 1966 and the first

43. Gaury, Gerald, De. op. cit. p. 119.
44. Lackner Helen, op.cit, p.118
half of 1967 tended to dampen ideological rivalries within the Arab world, though lingering suspicions and resent continued until the outbreak of the Six Day War on 5 June 1967. The defeat of the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan had a sobering effect on the ideologically disunited Arab world. Israel's occupation of vast expanses of Arab land, including the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, necessitated a greater level of concentration on post-war reconstruction and policy formulation related to the Liberation of Arab land. At the Khartoum Summit (August-September 1967) Saudi Arabia found itself in a stronger position to influence the course of events in the Arab world. Aid was offered to Egypt (along with a general aid package from Arab oil producers) in turn for the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from the Yemen. Militarily weekend, Cairo no longer passed a threat to Saudi interests in the Gulf. Over the next decade Saudi aid to Egypt and other frontline state was given to keep the focus on Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem as an assurance against radicalism in the Gulf.

Two interrelated factors enabled Saudi Arabia to emerge as a dominant West Asian state from 1967 onward:

(a) Changes in the balance of power in the region after the June war and
(b) increasing oil wealth during the 1970s


If we are to refer to a 'resurgence' of Islam in Saudi foreign policy during this period, then it must also be seen in the light of the country's accumulating capital surplus, investments and growing dependencies of all consuming nations on a state with one-quarter of the world's proven oil reserves. There may be more than a grain's of truth in the observation that Islam's 'resurgence' in the 1970s come out of a barrel of oil. Yet it is important to observe the distinction between Islam as an ideology of the state and a religious or cultural revival. The latter is only one fact of an ideological resurgence which has enabled Saudi Arabia to exert its influence within the Arab African and Islamic worlds - and to a lesser extent in Europe and the US.\(^{48}\)

For analytical purposes it is difficult to separate the various stands of Saudi Arabia's Islamic policies. In Saudi minds they might well be inter-woven-as we have seen in earlier phases\(^{49}\). Yet analysis of Saudi foreign policy does provide same opportunity for determining priorities based on ideological objective. The direction of Saudi foreign economic assistance which is closely allied to foreign-policy objectives permits some ordering in this respect.\(^{50}\)

Since 1967 foreign aid has been used to achieve the following goods: (a) Support for Arab frontline states confronting Israel (including the Palestine Liberation Organisation), (b) attainment of regional stability, security and the


\(^{49}\) Lackner Helen., op.cit., p.118.

\(^{50}\) Lackner Helen, op.cit., p.68.
suppression of radicalism (i.e. Communism, Socialism, etc.), (c) furtherance of social and economic development within the Islamic world, including the spread of religious norms and values

In short, Saudi international behaviour emphasize the primacy of Islam and promotes 'moderate' or pro-western regimes in the Arab-Islamic world, loathing the atheistic communist ideology.

51. A.I. Dawisha, 'Saudi Foreign Policy, Orbis, Vol.23. No. 1, April 1979, p.139.