

# **THE FOREIGN POLICY OF KING ABDULAZIZ**

**(1927 - 1953)**

**A Study in the International Relations of an Emerging State**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Dedication

*This work is dedicated to my beloved father and mother, who have shown so much patience during my long absences from my country. I also dedicate this work to my devoted wife, Hayya, for her unlimited encouragement, support and patience. Also, I dedicate this work to my children Madawi, Zaid, Nassir, Al'anood, Hind, Turki and Najla' for their long patience. Finally, I dedicate it to my brothers 'Id, Shalih, Nassir and Fuhaid, for their support and to my entire family.*

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## Abstract

King Abdulaziz stood out as a major figure in Saudi domestic and foreign policy. He laid the foundation for Saudi foreign policy and international relations. Available studies on King Abdulaziz's foreign policy either concentrated on earlier periods or dealt with part of his era. This study deals with the whole period of King Abdulaziz, approaches his foreign policy as a case study of a newly-emerging state and assesses the problems associated with this case.

The study is organised as follows: chapter one discusses the rise of King Abdulaziz and the Saudi achievement of a sense of statehood. Chapter two explores the problems which confront newly-emerging states in the formulation and implementation of their foreign policy. Chapter three discusses the genesis of Saudi foreign policy structure. Chapter four focuses on Saudi Arabia's policy towards the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula. Chapter five examines the policy of King Abdulaziz towards the Arab World. Chapter six addresses the King's policy in the area of Islamic affairs. Chapter seven analyzes the King's relations with Britain after the Treaty of Jeddah of 1927. Chapter eight deals with Saudi policy towards the U.S.

The study hopes to provide a better understanding of the process of Saudi foreign policy making under King Abdulaziz. A major finding of this study is throwing light on the problems experienced by Saudi Arabia as a newly-emerging state while making and implementing its foreign policy, particularly, in relation to a number of specific and general factors underlying the making and execution of this foreign policy. In this sense the study hopes to make a modest contribution to the available literature on King Abdulaziz's foreign policy.

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## Introduction

Although several studies have been carried out on Saudi foreign policy and its international relations, most of them covered either earlier or more modern periods or only part of King Abdulaziz's reign, such as *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia: The formative years, 1902-1918*, by Jacob Goldberg, and *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia since 1945*, by Ghassan Salama. Other studies covered Saudi relations with a specific country such as *The Relations of Ibn Saud with Great Britain, 1902-1953*, by Tayeb, Mohammad. However, not much work has been done on King Abdulaziz's reign as a whole from the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1927 until his death in 1953. The advantage of studying King Abdulaziz's period as a whole would reveal the general trends in his foreign policy and its direction. It is hoped that this study would constitute a modest contribution towards filling this gap in the literature on Saudi foreign policy.

A major aim of this study is to assess the factors that underlay the making and implementation of Saudi foreign policy during the era of King Abdulaziz and examine the problems associated with these factors. Since Saudi Arabia is taken as a case study of a newly emerging state at that time, the study will also relate these problems and factors to those experienced by newly-emerging states in the general field of International Relations.

Through our findings we hope to arrive at a better understanding of the process of Saudi foreign policy making during King Abdulaziz period, as a case study, and throw light on the situation experienced by newly-emerging states while making and implementing their foreign policy. Despite the rise of numerous new states within the international community since the 1950s, it is surprising that the foreign policy of newly-emerging states is still being under studied. Only a handful of major works have been done on this subject in the field of International Relations. This makes it

worthwhile to attempt to explore this area further by not only dealing with it in a general manner, but with illustration from a case study.

The case of Saudi Arabia under King Abdulaziz provides a fertile example in the area of foreign policy making because of the wide range of personal, domestic, regional and international factors involved in this process, which would help to shed further light on the foreign policy problems encountered by newly-emerging states. It is so, because Saudi Arabia was one of the very few Middle Eastern states to emerge in the inter-war period (along with Yemen, Turkey and Iran) prior to the general era of independence in the area. The Saudi case would help to explore the dynamics of foreign policy making and implementation experienced by various newly emerging states in view of the problems encountered by King Abdulaziz as a state builder and the opportunities he grasped in his course of leadership.

This proposed investigation will mainly conduct a documentary analysis of the course of King Abdulaziz's foreign policy during the period under study. The research will rely on available Saudi, British, American and other primary resources. The Research will also cover published academic works, and past and present periodicals in both Arabic and English. Evidence will be also gathered from interviews with persons who were close to the King, and from others considered to be interested in Saudi foreign policy matters.

This study consists of eight chapters, in addition to conclusions. The first chapter discusses the rise of King Abdulaziz and the Saudi achievement of a sense of statehood. It explores the early Life of King Abdulaziz, discusses the territorial conquests and expansion (the conquest of Riyadh and the rest of Najd, al-Hasa, Asir, Hail and the North, al-Hijaz and Jaizan), examines the transformation from tribalism towards a concept of community and traces the early international relations of Ibn Saud with the Turks and British.

The second chapter is an evaluative review of literature and it examines the international relations and foreign policy of newly-emerging states. It presents a typology of newly-emerging states, assesses the foreign policy problems confronting them (such as establishing a new national identity, building political structure and foreign policy institutions, finding the right leadership, achieving political stability, securing economic resources, coping with the colonial legacy and maintaining national security), and outlining the specific features of foreign policy-making in newly emerging states.

Chapter three sheds light on the genesis of Saudi foreign policy structure. It analyses the role of King Abdulaziz as a leader, examines the role of his counsellors, traces the evolution of Saudi Foreign Ministry and other governmental institutions and ascertains the influence of other internal factors (such as the Royal Family, religious scholars and the tribes) on King Abdulaziz's foreign policy making.

Chapter four discusses Saudi Arabia's policy towards the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula. It maps the general features of King Abdulaziz's policy towards the Peninsula, analyses Ibn Saud's relations with the individual Gulf Shaikhdoms (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Shaikhdoms of the Lower Gulf and the Sultanate of Oman) and addresses the Saudi-Yemeni relations.

The fifth chapter discusses the policy of King Abdulaziz towards the Arab World. It deals with the Palestine Problem (The King's action on the Palestinian-Arab front, his policy towards Britain as the Mandatory Power in Palestine and his stance towards the Zionist activity) and appraises the King's policy towards colonialism in Arab countries (his relationship with Arab leaders and the Arab national liberation movements and his approach to inter-Arab relations).

Chapter six focuses on the King's policy regarding Islamic affairs. It examines the King's vision of the Islamic identity of Saudi Arabia, attempts to visualise King

Abdulaziz's worldview and the role of Islam in it and then discusses King Abdulaziz's foreign policy towards the Muslim states.

The seventh chapter analyses the King's relations with Britain after the Treaty of Jeddah of 1927. It addresses the role of the Ikhwan rebellion, Saudi diplomatic crisis with the British Ambassador, the question of oil concessions and the Saudi financial crisis, the growth of the Italian and German influence around the period of the Second World War, the British position on the Saudi-Hashemite rivalry and al-Buraimi oasis dispute and Britain's protection of the Gulf Shaikhdoms.

Chapter eight evaluates the Saudi policy towards the United States of America. It discusses the Saudi response towards early American contacts, the factors behind the granting of an oil concession to an American company, the importance of the Saudi-American summit meeting, the King's attempts to influence U.S. policy on Palestine, the mutual Saudi-American security relationship and the American assistance to Saudi Arabia in the area of development.

The conclusions of the study summarise the major findings arrived at through the course of this work.

## **Chapter One: Towards Statehood: The Rise of Abdulaziz**

### **1.1 The Early Life of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud**

Abdulaziz Ibn Abdulrahman Ibn Faisal al-Saudi is known as Ibn Saud (Williams, 1933:25; Philby, 1955:240). A ruler highly regarded by his people, his great achievement was the unification of the warring tribes, which had different interests, and the creation of the Saudi state, establishing its unity and national identity, and laying the foundations of its modern evolution (al-'Uthaimen, 1999:6). He perceived his success to have derived from his faith in Islam and his determination to maintain and build on the traditions of the region. It remains this unique combination of faith and respect for traditions, while adapting to the technological developments of the modern world, which characterizes Saudi Arabia today (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983: 156-159).

Al-Zirikli (1977a:58) mentions that some writers have cited from Abd al- Aziz as saying that he was born in 1880, a date which is supported by the famous British writer H. St. John Philby (1952:1). Many others have given different dates. Some believe that he was born as early as 1867 (Muzil, 1928:301). Others state that he was born in 1876, a date confirmed by his brother, Prince Abdullah (al- Zirikli, 1977a:58), and also by his son, Prince Talal (al-Saud, 1990:26); the latter date of birth is agreed upon by the majority of writers on the subject (al-'Uthaimen, 1999:45). Ibn Saud spent his childhood years in Riyadh, and thus witnessed the struggle within the Saudi household for the leadership, which ended with them falling under the domination of Ibn Rasheed, who conquered Riyadh in 1890-1891, expelling most of Al Saud to Hail (Troeller, 1976:19; Rashid and Shaheen, 1987:10). Some of Al Saud sought refuge in neighbouring countries, as what Imam Abdulrahman did when he emigrated with his family, among them his son Abdulaziz, to seek refuge among the neighbouring tribes, then on to Qatar for a period of approximately two months, then to Bahrain for a short time and finally to Kuwait, where they settled for a decade. Abdulaziz stayed in Kuwait until he began his struggle to build his modern state (al-'Asaly, 1999:33).

## 1.2 Territorial Conquest and Expansion

### 1.2.1 The Conquest of Riyadh and the Consolidation of Sovereignty in Najd

The history of modern Saudi Arabia began in 1902, when Ibn Saud left Kuwait during the autumn of 1901, as Philby (1955: 239) writes, with forty of his devoted friends, and reached Riyadh in January 1902. Some writers indicated that the total number of his men was about sixty (al-'Uthaimen, 1999:359; al- Zirikli, 1977a: 84). The retaking of Riyadh was to be the essential step in re-establishing his ancestors' realm and demonstrated his brilliant leadership and his personal boldness. These were important factors in convincing the people of Najd to trust and obey him. Goldberg (1986: 48) stated "*The capture of Riyadh by Ibn Saud on the night of January 15, 1902, was an almost unprecedented military adventure*".

Under cover of night, together with several other volunteers, Ibn Saud stealthily made his way to a part of the city wall which he knew they could easily scale. The small group quietly made its way to an empty house close to the residence of Ajlan (the Governor of Riyadh). They entered the empty house, climbed to the roof and, by leaping from one roof to the next, quickly reached the Governor's residence. While Ibn Saud was waiting, he sent one of his men to his brother Mohammad to ask him to bring his group into Riyadh. Shortly after sunrise, Ajlan emerged from the fort of al-Musmaq into the street. With his quarry in the open, Abdulaziz gave a loud battle cry as a signal to attack. Ajlan fled, and Ibn Saud, with his companions, gave hot pursuit. Quickly cornered, Ajlan defended himself briefly until the spear of Abdullah Ibn Jelawi cut him down (Howarth, 1964:20-23; al-'Assaly, 1999: 42; Rashid and Shaheen, 1987:17-22).

The Rasheedi garrison of Riyadh was utterly demoralized by the unexpected attack and the death of their leader. Assuming that only a large and well-equipped force could have mounted such an assault, they laid down their arms and surrendered

without further resistance. Riyadh now belonged to Abdulaziz and Al Saud were once more masters in their own home (Lacey, 1981:52; Rashid and Shaheen, 1987: 21-22). At noon of that day, thousands of Riyadh's citizens welcomed the return of Al Saud, and gathered to swear an oath of allegiance (bay'ah) to the young hero and pray behind him in Riyadh's Grand Mosque (Lacey, 1981:52).

After the retaking of Riyadh, Ibn Saud wasted no time in expanding his authority. His drive for consolidation was successful and he managed to break the stranglehold of al-Rasheed and push them as far as Jabal Shammar in northern Najd. At this point, however, al-Rasheed made a desperate appeal to the Turks, who sent them reinforcements. Nevertheless, Ibn Saud's desert fighters kept control of the situation in Najd. Through diplomatic negotiations at one time, and guerrilla warfare at another, Ibn Saud forced the Ottoman Empire to recall its troops from Najd. It could be said that Ibn Saud, at the end of 1911, enjoyed complete control over most of the Najd area including al-Kharj, al-Washm, Sudair and al-Qaseem (Vassiliev, 1998: 212-225). According to Ghazal (1984:113), Ibn Saud had consolidated his authority in central Najd by the end of 1911. He then took advantage of the temporary peace and shifted his attention to internal affairs.

### **1.2.2 Expansion into al-Hasa**

Having accomplished his objective of consolidating the region of Najd, Ibn Saud turned his attention to al-Hasa and the area of the Arabian Gulf, which was still under Turkish rule. The Turks kept up their pressure on Ibn Saud and supported the other forces ranged against him, such as Sharif Husain and Ibn Rasheed, and also some of the tribes that had formerly been his followers (al-Rayhani, 1988:205). Also, the Turks tightened the economic embargo on Ibn Saud by imposing restrictions on commercial exchange with al-Hijaz and al-Hasa (Hamzah, 1968:376). In addition, Ibn Saud believed that al-Hasa was part of the Saudi state and shared its long history; but the Turks had occupied it in violation of his rights (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:261-162).

Most of the people of al-Hasa, including some powerful and influential chiefs, such as Ibraheem al-Qusaibi, Hassan Ibn Jabur, Abdulrahman al-Rashid, Abdullah al-Mulla and Abdulrahman al-Jughaiman, wrote to Ibn Saud asking him to free them and their region from the Turks.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Saud saw that the time was right to expel the Turks from al-Hasa, because their continuing presence there would threaten his state from the East. By removing them he would secure a passage to the sea. He therefore began preparing for a bold and well-planned offensive (Nakhlah, 1980:231-232; Rashid and Shaheen, 1987: 27). Calculating that the Ottoman Empire would be preoccupied with uprisings in Europe, and that Britain would remain neutral, Ibn Saud launched a successful assault in May 1913, and succeeded in consolidating his authority in al-Hasa (Rashid and Shaheen, 1987: 27; McLoughlin, 1993:36). As a result, negotiations started between the Turks and Ibn Saud and ended with Ibn Saud's recognition of the Ottoman Caliph suzerainty over Ibn Saud's territories, and the Turks recognised Ibn Saud's authority. They signed this treaty on 15 May 1914<sup>2</sup> (Troeller, 1976:43-61; Vassiliev, 1998:231-233; Aghlag, 2002: 127-129&200).

### 1.2.3 Ibn Saud Conquers Asir

The Battle of Turabah, in which Ibn Saud's followers defeated those of Sharif Husain in 1919,<sup>3</sup> was one of the most decisive battles in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. Kostiner (1993:31) writes: "*Turabah led to an unprecedented collision course between the Nejd and Sharifi forces*". Ibn Saud's victory against an army which was well prepared and well equipped with modern weapons, ended the Sharif's ambition

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<sup>1</sup> This information was supplied by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004. Shaikh Ahmad represented his country, Saudi Arabia, as an Ambassador in several places before his retirement in 1995. His latest position was the Saudi Ambassador in Qatar.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/385, despatch from Terence H. Keyes, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Stuart G. Knox, the Deputy British Political Resident in Bushire, on 30 June 1914; India Office, L/P&S/12/2134, copy of the treaty of 1914 between Ibn Saud and the Turks.

<sup>3</sup> American Archives, 890 F.00/8, despatch from the American Consul in Aden to the American Secretary of State on 20 September 1919.



in Najd and enhanced the morale of Ibn Saud and his army, increasing their strength and fearlessness (Graves, 1950:181-182; al-Salloom, 1995:35).

After Ibn Saud's victory at Turabah, the majority of the people of the Asir region, especially the tribes of the Asir Mountains, began to complain about the policy of al-'Ayids, the rulers of Asir. Some of the tribal representatives made their complaints to Ibn Saud, because he was the rising leader in this region, and the only one who would be able to liberate them from their unsatisfactory leaders. The people of Asir were also aware of the religious tie binding them to the people of Najd, who had followed the same beliefs (al-Madhab al-Salafi) from the early days (al-Saud, 1992:30). There was also a long-standing political, economic and social relationship between Najd and Asir. Some of the tribes, such as Qahtan, Shahrān, Ghamid and Zahran, resisted al-'Ayids. They also continued to demand Ibn Saud's protection, declaring their full recognition of his leadership and respect for his support (Hamzah, 1968:389; Vassiliev, 1998:259).

Ibn Saud sent a group of scholars from Najd to mediate, but the Asir Governor rejected this intervention, regarding it as interference in his internal affairs. Ibn Saud was then obliged to intervene directly to help those people who had sought his aid, fearing the advance of Sharif Husain to the region. In 1920, Ibn Saud sent his army, under the command of his cousin, Abdulaziz Ibn Musa'ad, and entered Abha after al-'Ayids' defeat in Battle of Hijla. He then captured the heads of the al-'Ayids family and moved them to Riyadh, but later returned them to Asir as a sign of respect. Despite this courtesy, they eventually rebelled against him, which endangered his dominance in the region in danger (al-Rayhani, 1988:300-302). However, in 1922, just a few months after conquering Hail and strengthening his control of Asir, Ibn Saud sent to these regions his son, Prince Faisal, and six thousand fighters, who were later joined by another four thousand from Qahtan, Shahrān and Zahran. Prince Faisal and his army continued their advance until they reached Abha. After that, Prince Faisal then completed his offensive against al-'Ayids and consolidated Saudi sovereignty in Asir before the end of 1922, by appointing Sa'ad Ibn 'Ufaisan as Governor of the Province. After Ibn 'Ufaisan's death, Abdulaziz Ibn Ibraheem, who

was known for his wisdom, was appointed, and later succeeded in convincing al-'Ayids of their wrongdoing and moved them to Riyadh, thus ending their rebellion in the region (al-'Uthaimen, 1999:178-180).

#### **1.2.4 The Taking of Hail and the North**

In 1920, the household of al-Rasheed started to damage and undermine their own position through organized crimes and acts of murders within their Royal House. The Prince of Hail was killed by one of his relatives, who was himself immediately killed. A thirteen-year-old boy was then made head of the family (Troeller, 1976:168; al-Rasheed, 1998:235). Harmed by these events, the Hail region had also been weakened economically and militarily by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Ibn Saud was apprehensive that the weakness of the Hail region might invite other forces to intervene in its internal affairs, specially the Sharif in al-Hijaz, which could threaten his military position. He therefore resolved to end the independence of the Hail region and to add it to the other provinces of the Arabian Peninsula (al-'Uthaimen, 1999:167-169; al-Rasheed, 1998:232-235). So, in 1920, Ibn Saud launched an attack against Hail and its surrounding area, by sending his brother, Prince Mohammad, and his son, Prince Saud, with approximately six thousand fighters. They created a sustained blockade around Hail. Prince Mohammad returned to Riyadh but Prince Saud stayed in the region until the Governor of Hail surrendered in person to him, fearing that he would be killed by his cousin, Mohammad Ibn Talal, who had come back to Hail from al-Jawf, claiming Hail's leadership (al-Zirikli, 1977a:254).

In mid-August 1921, Ibn Saud went to Hail at the head of a large army. He intensified his siege of Hail until it surrendered in November, thus ending the rule of the al-Rasheed Family. Ibn Saud designated Ibraheem Ibn Sabhan, as Governor of Hail; Ibn Sabhan was known for his role in convincing the people of Hail to end their opposition. He was then replaced by Prince Abdulaziz Ibn Musa'ad as Governor of Hail and the Northern Regions (al-Salloom, 1995:40-41). In 1922, Ibn Saud expanded

his western and northern borders by adding Taima, Khaibar, al-Jawf and the al-Sarhan valley area, thus strengthening his domination and sovereignty over the region as a whole (Hamzah, 1968:388).

### 1.2.5 The Conquest of al-Hijaz

Ibn Saud became convinced that the three neighbouring governments of al-Hijaz, Trans-Jordan and Iraq entertained ambitions regarding his territories and were working together to threaten the stability of his Government.<sup>1</sup> This conspiracy became evident during the Kuwait Conference which was organized by the British Government to resolve the border disputes and the tribal problems existing between Najd and Its Dependencies, with Iraq, Trans-Jordan and al-Hijaz. The Conference took place in Kuwait in 1923-1924 as a neutral land (Troeller, 1976:198; Wahbah, 1964:148).

At this time, Sharif Husain was also condemned by the people of al-Hijaz for his policies. He even differed with his sons, his counsellors, and most of the Arabs and non-Arab Muslims, particularly when he declared war against the Turks (the Caliphs of Islam), under the banner of the Arab Revolt in 1916 (Graves, 1950: 187; Baker, 1979:173; al-Salloom, 1995:46; Wahbah 1964:147). In the eyes of many, he was responsible for the increased Western colonial presence, which had replaced the Ottoman power. By involving the Arabs in the war, he forced them into internal disputes and, moreover, created a dangerous problem for the Arab countries, whose citizens now were compelled to deal with two alien imperial powers, Britain and

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter, during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004. Al-Khuwaiter is a Saudi Minister of State and member of the Saudi Council of Ministers. He was the former Minister of Education; 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 236, 5 July 1929, and Issue No. 389, 27 May 1932.

France. His policy angered the Arabs and provoked them to seek revenge<sup>1</sup> (al-Salloom, 1995:46).

Furthermore, Sharif Husain's religious position was also precarious, due to the absence of security in the Holy Places, and the failure to provide the pilgrims with the basic facilities they needed when performing Hajj. For example, medical services were either lacking or difficult to obtain. Baker (1979:177) described al-Hijaz at that time as the hunting ground of charlatans, rogues, adventurers and carpetbaggers of every hue.<sup>2</sup> This made the people of al-Hijaz long for strong leadership and so they began to contact Ibn Saud secretly, which led the Great Powers' legations in Jeddah, including Britain's, to adopt a neutral position between Sharif Husain and Ibn Saud.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, the legations of Great Powers in Jeddah became convinced that security in the Holy Places would be threatened more under Sharif Husain's leadership and that a strong and influential leader was needed to guarantee peace and security for their Muslim followers during the Hajj.<sup>4</sup> There were also disagreements between the Sharif and some Arab delegations, which led the Egyptian delegation to leave al-Hijaz in 1921. Disagreement also grew between the Sharif and Indian pilgrims, then under British control, over many issues, such as the higher taxes, and the poor sanitary and medical facilities provided for them ('Abduh, 1945:109; Wahbah, 1964: 146-147; Howarth, 1964: 140; Vassiliev, 1998:260).

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; Bakur al-'Amri also supported this idea during my interview with him in Jeddah on 1 January 2004. Bakur al-'Amri was former Professor of the Political Sciences in the University of King Abdulaziz in Jeddah. Now he is the Head of Customs Appellate Court in the Makkah Province.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz, Head of the Saudi Centre for Strategic Studies. This was during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>3</sup> This was supported by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz and Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with them in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; this was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>4</sup> This was supported by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; this also was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

Adding to the Sharif's loss of his religious and international position were the taxes and fees imposed on pilgrims during their different Hajj phases. Sharif Husain relied on those taxes as a primary income, benefiting him personally and enriching his state. This situation led to the breakdown of relationships between him and the consulates of the countries that had large numbers of pilgrims, including some African countries, India and Indonesia, and those of the colonial powers, Britain and Holland (Graves, 1950: 182; Howarth, 1964:140; Lacey, 1981:88-89; Vassiliev, 1998:206). In addition, proclaiming himself as the Caliph, in March 1924, brought regional and international pressures to bear on him, since this act was rejected by many Muslim leaders, such as the King of Egypt, and the Islamic governments in South Asia and Iran (Vassiliev, 1998:261; Alangari, 1998:128-141; Howarth, 1964:141). The Sharif also lacked recognition by Ibn Saud and his followers in Najd (Vassiliev, 1998:261; Howarth, 1964:141). Baker (1979: 184-187) regarded this act by Sharif Husain as a form of political suicide and added that the Sharif was finished as the ruler of the Arabs, Muslims, and even Hijazis. In addition, the Sharif's act alienated him from Britain, which realized it had lost control over him (Vassiliev, 1998:261; Alangari, 1998:128-141; Howarth, 1964:141).

It has been maintained that Ibn Saud was convinced of his military ability to take al-Hijaz since the victory at Turabah in 1919, but he waited for a suitable time<sup>1</sup> (Howarth, 1964:141). In 1924 all circumstances were suitable for Ibn Saud to take the initiative against Sharif Husain since the Sharif alienated himself from all his neighbours and allies. This was in view of his policies and attitudes, such as the diplomatic dispute with Britain over several issues, among them were the question of the Caliphate,<sup>2</sup> the issue of Palestine and the Mandate policies, the dispute with France over Syria, the problem with India over its pilgrims, the problem with King Fuad of Egypt, when the Sharif called himself the King of Arabs and the Caliph, the

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004. Lateefah al-Salloom is the Delegate Member to the Assessment Centre for Girls' Colleges, Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> This was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

problem with Ibn Saud for the same reason and also over the boundaries between them, and the disagreements with his sons regarding their conception of what constitute Arab interests including their attitudes towards Britain policy in the area. Day by day, Sharif Husain isolated himself from the international community, while, domestically, the situation with the people of al-Hijaz and his internal affairs was far worse<sup>1</sup> (Baker, 1979:173).

Ibn Saud had all the available reasons to justify launching his offensive against the Sharif. Ibn Saud suffered a great deal from the Sharif's standing in the way of Ikhwan (Ibn Saud's followers) who wanted to attack al-Hijaz, having been refused permission to perform the Hajj by the Sharif since the famous Battle of Turabah in 1919.<sup>2</sup> That was one of the major reasons behind Abdulaziz's conquest of al-Hijaz.<sup>3</sup> The Ikhwan urged Ibn Saud, through their leaders, to allow them to go on Hajj, and even to use force if the Sharif did not permit them into al-Hijaz. The religious scholars decided upon a Fatwa (legal opinion) to go on Hajj. By an agreement with them, Ibn Saud officially announced his intention to conquer al-Hijaz (al-Rayhani, 1988:326). It has been maintained that the Ikhwan, sooner or later, would have invaded al-Hijaz to perform the Hajj.<sup>4</sup> This fact was seen as an important factor for British neutrality in the Najdi-Hijazi dispute.<sup>5</sup> Another important reason for Britain's neutral position was

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak, during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; this was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh, on 19 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz insists that this was the major reason for Ibn Saud's occupation of al-Hijaz. This was indicated during my interviews with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003 and 1 January 2004; also this was supported by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; See also 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 236, 5 July 1929, and Issue No. 389, 27 May 1932.

<sup>4</sup> This was supported by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; this was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>5</sup> This was supported by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004

its realization that the Hijazi people, including part of the Sharif's Royal Family, were welcoming Ibn Saud.<sup>1</sup> However, as has been maintained, Britain, at this time, was not able to stop the advance of Ibn Saud and his followers, due to the fact that they could not, economically or militarily, support Sharif Husain any longer.<sup>2</sup>

The army started moving in 1924 from Turabah, with approximately three thousand fighters, led by Sultan Ibn Bijad and Khalid Ibn Luway. They arrived at al-Hawiyyah and then at al-Taif, where they were encountered by the Hashemite army under the command of Sabri Basha al-'Azzawi. The Hashemite army retreated and, after two days, Prince Ali and the main Hijazi army reached al-Hada. After a few skirmishes with the Saudis, the Saudi fighters broke through al-Taif. They plundered it and many people were murdered,<sup>3</sup> until the arrival of Ibn Bijad three days later. These acts left a negative impact on the Hijazi and the Najdian communities as well. Ibn Saud denounced such acts and ordered his army not to repeat them. He also gave his promise to protect the people of al-Hijaz and their properties and to compensate those affected in al-Taif (al-Zirikli, 1977a:330-331; Vassiliev, 1998:261).

The fighting continued until the defeat of Prince Ali al-Sharif, who then went to Makkah to meet his father and then to Jeddah. In those circumstances, and in the light of the shock of the defeat of Sharif Husain's forces, the people in Makkah and Jeddah, fearing the consequences of his policy, asked him to step down from the Hashemite throne and let his son, Sharif Ali, take over. He refused, at first, then agreed; so his son came to Makkah, and then Sharif Husain left for Jeddah and went by sea to al-'Aqabah in Jordan. At the same time, the Saudi army had stopped in al-Taif and written to Ibn Saud asking for his permission to advance and capture Makkah. He

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<sup>1</sup> This was indicated by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz and Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with them in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; this was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> American Archives, 890 F.00/43, despatch from J. L. Park, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 7 October 1924.

ordered them not to go into the Holy Place until he arrived, or, if there was no resistance at all against them, to go in. That was exactly what happened. When Sharif Ali found that he could not defend Makkah, he left, allowing the Saudi forces to enter Makkah in October 1924, promising the people there peace and security (al-Zirikli, 1977a:332-333; al-Rayhani, 1988:336-351). As soon as his followers entered Makkah, Ibn Saud left Riyadh for Makkah at the head of five thousand of his followers. He entered the city on 5 December 1924 (Vassiliev, 1998:262).

It is important to note that the Consuls representing the foreign governments in Jeddah wrote to Khalid Ibn Luway, Prince of Makkah, who had been appointed by Ibn Saud, confirming to him their neutral position regarding the war between Najd and al-Hijaz. They wrote asking for a guarantee of safety for their citizens in case the war continued. Khalid Ibn Luway agreed and let Ibn Saud know of this good news while he was on his way to Makkah. Ibn Saud welcomed the neutral position of these countries and felt that al-Hijaz now belonged to him although he suspected that Britain might intervene to the benefit of his enemies (ibid: 262).

Jeddah had been under siege since January 1925. After the end of the Hajj, the Saudi army began to tighten the siege on Jeddah, fearing that Sharif Ali might attack again to liberate al-Hijaz from the Saudis. Although Ibn Saud had the power to enter Jeddah, he preferred to sustain the siege until the city surrendered and not to cause more bloodshed. The same happened to al-Madinah. The Saudi army, under Faisal al-Dawish, besieged it for ten months. After the people of al-Madinah gave themselves up, they asked Ibn Saud if they could be governed by one of his sons rather than al-Dawish. He agreed and appointed his son, Prince Mohammad, in December 1925, as Prince of al-Madinah. However, the situation in Jeddah was different. Prince Ali found that he could not get help from his brothers in Iraq and Trans-Jordan when additional Saudi forces arrived at al-Raghamah, under the command of Princes Abdullah Ibn Abdulrahman and Faisal Ibn Abdulaziz. So, Sharif Ali asked the British Consul to mediate between him and Ibn Saud so that he could surrender and leave the city. Ibn Saud agreed and let Sharif Ali leave with his belongings for any place he chose, and also agreed to guarantee the safety of the people of Jeddah. Ibn Saud



entered Jeddah after Sharif Ali had left in December 1925, thus proclaiming his sovereignty over al-Hijaz and becoming the new King of al-Hijaz (al-Salloom, 1995:55-56; Vassiliev, 1998:264).

### **1.2.6 Ibn Saud adds Jaizan**

The Jaizan region was governed by al-Idreesi, who had been committed to a neighbourhood treaty with Ibn Saud since the latter occupied Asir in 1920. The Imam of Yemen did not dispute this treaty, although he would have liked to take control of Jaizan. Rivalry within the al-Idreesi family started after the death of Mohammad al-Idreesi; this resulted in a power vacuum in Jaizan. This situation encouraged the Imam of Yemen to attack Jaizan at a time when Ibn Saud was preoccupied in al-Hijaz. The advancing Yemeni army occupied al-Hudaidah and its northern regions (al-Zirikli, 1977a:535; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:205-207).

In this situation, al-Hasan al-Idreesi took the leadership of Jaizan and asked for support from the Italians and British, which they did not give. This coincided with the difficulties Ibn Saud was facing in al-Hijaz. Al-Idreesi saw that the only way to stop the advance of the Yemenis into his region and save what was left was to ask for the protection of Ibn Saud. So, in 1926,<sup>1</sup> he signed a treaty with Ibn Saud, giving Ibn Saud the right to control foreign affairs and stop any aggression against this region, leaving the Idreesi in control of internal affairs. When al-Idreesi resigned in 1930,<sup>2</sup> full control over this region was exercised by Ibn Saud, who then integrated it into the rest of his kingdom (Wenner, 1967: 144; al- Zirikli, 1977a:535-536; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:206-207).

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.014, despatch from Henry P. Fletcher at the American Embassy in Rome to the American Secretary of State, on 25 February 1927.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; this was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

It has been explained that al-Idreesi Governor resigned completely in favour of Ibn Saud for several reasons, among which was the internal dispute within the Idreesi family itself and also with their people.<sup>1</sup> Also, the threat from Imam Yahya of Yemen was a main reason, which convinced al-Idreesi to give in completely to Ibn Saud, for he would have lost everything if Ibn Saud had decided to take over and do what he had done with Sharif Husain.<sup>2</sup> With the consolidation of his sovereignty in Jaizan, Ibn Saud accomplished the unification of most of the Arabian Peninsula under his leadership as one political unit, which came to be known, from 1932 onwards, as "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".

### **1.3 Transformation from Tribalism Towards a Sense of Community Under Ibn Saud's Leadership**

Abdulaziz Ibn Saud was one of the most influential leaders in modern Arab history in view of his unification of various regions of the Arabian Peninsula and his creation of a modern state, bringing its people from internal factionalism, isolation and a nomadic way of life to be citizens of a modern urban society, in the context of a unified political system. By doing so, he believed that he had achieved his goal of promoting the word of Allah and the unification of his nation, with divine help and relying on his faith, good character and confidence. Ibn Saud was able to create a balance between his belief in Allah and the noble Islamic teachings on the one hand, and his loyalty to the customs and traditions of his people, which, he believed, did not conflict with Islam, on the other. This helped him to gain the confidence of his people, who came to trust his leadership, a trust which enabled him to create his modern state (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:156-159; al-Khuwaiter, 1998: 30-36).

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> This was stated by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

Armstrong (1934:291-292) stated *“Ibn Saud is Lord of Arabia ruling by the force of his personality and the strength of his own right arm”*. He added, *“He stands, basing himself four square on his trust in God, straddled across Arabia holding the whole land and its people between his clenched fist. He is inspired by a driving Belief, the belief that he has been entrusted by God with a mission to knit all Arabs into one People, to lead them back to the greatness of their forefathers, and to make the Word of God Supreme.”* In addition to Ibn Saud’s strict belief in God, he had a charismatic authority, manifested in his physical features and behaviour, which convinced his followers of his powerful leadership and his courage. Several writers have remarked that Ibn Saud was more than six feet tall, with a good physique, handsome features and fair skin. In addition to this, he had excellent political and diplomatic abilities, which impressed his tribal followers (al-‘Aqqad, N.D.:24-35; Alman, 1980:243-245; al-Zirikli, 1977a:735; Holden and Johns, 1981:64).

Ibn Saud was well-known for being frank, clear and modest in his dealings with others, which the people of the Arabian Peninsula appreciated, especially the men of the tribes. He was keen to avoid the use of force or to adopt a dictatorial manner in his leadership. His belief in God, sincerity in his religion and his modesty, enabled his people to get direct access to him; they would call him by his first name and he would almost always know them personally<sup>1</sup> (De Gaury, 1946:83). In addition, his unlimited generosity had a great impact on his followers, because in the Arab world generosity is an important aspect of leadership. Ibn Saud was also transparent in his speeches, with a clear and understandable language, using the most direct words. He would come straight to the point, which was what his people liked in him.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Saud was also patient and slow to anger, which earned him much credit among his people and this helped him in his decision-making. It could be said that Ibn Saud was born a leader and that no leader in the Peninsula was better equipped than him in his profound religiousness, generosity, humanity and simplicity (Williams, 1933:253-259; Alman, 1980:229-242; al-Khuwaiter, 1998: 19-36). McLoughlin (1993:67)

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 283, 5 May 1930; al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 283, 5 May 1930.

notes that after al-Rayhani met Ibn Saud he stated clearly his opinion of him, *“I have now met all the Kings of Arabia and I find no one among them bigger than this man. He is big in word and gesture and style as well as in purpose and self-confidence.”*

The confidence of the people of the Arabian Peninsula in Ibn Saud's leadership and the clarity and dignity of his objectives lay behind their obedience to him and their welcoming of his leadership from the first time he entered Riyadh. They stood with him to achieve his goals, one of which was the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, and asked him for help against their local leaders, in provinces such as al-Hasa, Asir and Jaizan. It was within only four years of entering Riyadh that he found himself the most influential and powerful leader in the heart of Najd. Philby (1930:199) wrote that, by the end of 1906, Ibn Saud found himself in a stronger political position in Najd, since his two opponents (al-Rasheed and the Turks) were no longer a threat to him. As a result, he worked to strengthen his power and develop his administration of the regions under his authority. These regions at that time were without the administrative or governmental foundations of a modern state. The reason for this was that Najd, which was regarded as the heart of the newly emerging state, had not been subjected to any foreign rule,<sup>1</sup> from which it could have benefited in terms of governmental structure and experience (Benoist-Mechin, 1965:29; Harik, 1987:19).

It is worth mentioning here that in order to overcome this lack of governmental experience, Ibn Saud sought help from a number of Arab experts, who assisted him in implementing new ideas and methods in state administration and government structure. Ibn Saud also believed in the principle of providing opportunities to anyone who wanted to work for the new state. Those who came to him, with the will and the determination to work, were given responsible positions in government, whether or not they were from the Peninsula. Their abilities, achievements, honesty and respect for their duties were rewarded with promotions (Kostiner, 1993:105; Howarth, 1964:116; al-Mareq, 1978:311:314; al- Zirikli, 1977a:1011-1014).

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<sup>1</sup> Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador to the US, in *'Ida'at Programme*, on al-'Arabiyyah TV Channel, on 9 June 2004; also, Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

Ghazal (1984:113) states that the year 1911 was a quiet period in Ibn Saud's reign within Najd. He used this time to attend to internal affairs. This was the right time to execute the ambitious project he had planned for so long. This great project was the settlement of the Bedouins, which began in 1912 with the creation of the first settlement (Hijrah) of al-Artawiyyah, whose population consisted of Bedouins from the Harb and Mutair tribes (Mcloughlin, 1993:42; Vassiliev, 1998:228). Ibn Saud's concern at this time, with administrative development and the creation of a modern state dated back to earlier in his reign. His intention was to settle the Bedouin in groups, for he wanted to enhance their development and prosperity so that he could move towards promoting Islam among them,<sup>1</sup> which would enlarge the Saudi influence (Mcloughlin, 1993:43). He wanted the Bedouins to transfer their loyalty from the tribe to the newly emerging state and its leader. The creation of the settlements was therefore an important step in the construction of the country, and it helped Ibn Saud to unify the different regions of Saudi Arabia<sup>2</sup> (Helms, 1981:127).

This was one of Ibn Saud's most significant achievements in his country's internal affairs, because the majority of the inhabitants of the central Arabian Peninsula were nomad Bedouins. Ibn Saud chose the policy of settling them in civilized regions so that they could learn other ways of living, such as agriculture and other professions which would benefit the country, rather than stay as shepherds. To achieve that, he ordered the designation of localities for each tribe according to its size and the number of its people. The localities had to be close to water resources. He then sent Muslim scholars to advise the Bedouin and urge them to live in those localities, and educate and teach them the Islamic beliefs and values, and guide them to devote their efforts to the political unification of all the regions of the Peninsula. To achieve his aim, Ibn Saud used both intimidation and temptation, whereby he made all Bedouins in the areas under his influence rush to his call. He gave them instructions for the

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<sup>1</sup> This was also argued by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; also, this was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was maintained by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; this was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

execution of his idea and persuaded them that they would benefit from his big project (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 259-268; Howarth, 1964: 16; al-Rayhani, 1988:258-266).

At the end of 1920, according to Vassiliev (1998:228) the number of settlements (al-Hijar) had reached 52, and increased to 72 in 1923, and by 1929, there were 120 settlements. Lacey (1982:146) and Helms (1981:137), however, stated that there were more than 200 settlements, which provided Ibn Saud with approximately sixty thousand fighters. Whatever the truth about the number of settlements, Ibn Saud had successfully realised his plan. The localities were more stable and more civilized, far better than the previous way of life of the nomad Bedouin. That was confirmed by Philby (1930:227) who stated that in 1927 the number of inhabitants in these settlements reached more than one hundred thousand and the number of fighters was estimated at approximately fifty thousand.

After Ibn Saud had achieved the goal of settlement, he was able to achieve several further goals, among which was bringing an end to invasion and plundering among the tribes and uniting them in larger societies under one central government and leadership. He encouraged them to believe in him as a religious (Imam) and political leader than as a tribal chieftain. This was due to the creation of mixed communities from different tribes. Moreover, the establishment of the nation's military forces from different tribes under the leadership of the central government helped to keep life more secure within the regions during Abdulaziz's reign (Helms, 1981:127-128; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:164).

Al-'Assaly (1999: 137) described the attempt of Ibn Saud to transform his people into a state community as a great success. And it was indeed. Although it was not completely accomplished, Ibn Saud worked to ensure continuity in implementing this task until the last day of his life. He did not neglect any development in the state institutions, and he introduced all the different means of modern life to the society. Al-Zirikli (1977a:571) pointed out that it was during Ibn Saud's reign, in 1926, that Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), from which all government rules and laws were issued, was created. Moreover, in 1925-1926, most of the important

governmental institutions were created, such as the judicial system (al-Nidham al-Qada'i), police authority (Mudiriyyat al-Shurtah al-'Ammah), finance department (Mudiriyyat al-Maliyyah) and foreign office (Mudiriyyat al-Kharijiyyah). Also, offices dealing with public health, ports management, telegraph, telephone and radio networks were created. Surely the King was the one who opened the door to civilization at all different levels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Kostiner, 1993:104-105; al-Zirikli, 1977a:576-580).

Saudi Arabia went through various phases before becoming what is known today as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of Ibn Saud's authority, the people of Najd used to call him the 'Imam' as they had called his predecessors. The people of the region later used to call him Sultan even before he himself officially used the title. He was also known by other names such as the Prince, al-Basha, Wali Najd and Shaikh. Others called him simply Ibn Saud, until 22 August 1921, when the scholars and men of influence of Najd gathered at a conference held in Riyadh and agreed to name him Sultan of Najd. Britain, from the beginning, acknowledged this title. After he captured the regions of Asir and Hail in 1922 the state was called al-Saltanah al-Najdiyyah and Its Dependencies (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 650; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:307).

After his conquest of the region of al-Hijaz in 1924-1926, the scholars and the influential people in Makkah and Jeddah gathered and asked Ibn Saud to agree to become the King of al-Hijaz, and declared that they would swear their allegiance (bay'ah) to him. Ibn Saud agreed to their demand and set a date for a meeting after the Friday (Jum'ah) prayer in the Sacred Mosque on 10 January 1926 to make this official. Thus Ibn Saud became the new King of al-Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and Its Dependencies. He was greeted not only by his own people but also by the consuls of foreign powers such as Britain, France, Holland, the Soviet Union and Turkey (al-Rayhani, 1988:427-429; Kostiner, 1993: 68-70).

After the people of al-Hijaz recognized him as their King, and he acquired the title of the King of al-Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and Its Dependencies, Ibn Saud returned to Riyadh in 1927, having already organized affairs in al-Hijaz and consolidated his

authority in this important region. As a result of the events in al-Hijaz, the people of Riyadh organized a conference in 1927, attended by a great number of scholars and the chiefs of the different regions of al-Saltanah al-Najdiyyah and Its Dependencies. There it was decided to change 'al-Saltanah al-Najdiyyah and Its Dependencies' to the 'Kingdom of Najd and Its Dependencies' and to call King Abdulaziz of al-Hijaz its King also. On 19 January, King Abdulaziz agreed and issued an order accepting that his title would be the King of Hijaz and Najd and Its Dependencies, and the news was forwarded to all consuls in his country (al-Salloom, 1995:64; al- Zirikli, 1977a: 650-651).

#### **1.4 The Middle East in International Relations from the End of the First World War**

The Middle East as it is defined today began to take shape in the years following the First World War. Most of the Middle East would be the Afro-Asian area of the former Ottoman territories. As a result of the Ottoman Empire's defeat, most of this region lay under Western colonial rule. However, no single state, either from within the area or from outside, was able to establish effective hegemony and thus to organise the entire Middle East. In fact, there was not a single imperial power, but three. Britain and France divided the bulk of the spoils; Italy had to be satisfied with Libya (Brown, 1984: 85-88).

In general, the weakness of Italy permitted British and French influence to dominate the Arab World after 1918. Germany was beaten, the USSR was absorbed in revolutionary reconstruction, and USA, after a brief period of involvement under Woodrow Wilson, returned to isolationism. Generally speaking, the Middle Eastern states were too weak to be true players in the international stage. They operated within a framework built and maintained primarily by Britain and France (Yapp, 1991:379-380). In the immediate post-war period, the more Westernised Fertile Crescent had no independent states;



these existed only in the Arabian Peninsula, where Ibn Saud was creating Saudi Arabia and Imam Yahya maintained a precarious independence in Yemen (Brown, 1984: 96-97).

Of the two major powers, Britain's greatest interest was the preservation of peace, which it sought through the League of Nations. It claimed that it had no intention of defending any part of the region by arms, relying instead on diplomacy, which meant, among other tactics, the conciliation of Italy, until Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 created contradictions in British policy (Yapp, 1991:380-381). Britain also was to attempt to appease the Arab states over Palestine (Ibid, 381). Communication and oil were also major British interests. With the former centred on the Suez Canal, Britain was concerned to guard the eastern shore of the Red Sea and the Gulf. Egypt was the key here, being the great junction of sea and air communications to Africa, India and the entire East. Despite considerable difficulties, Britain succeeded, by the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, in securing the continuation of the British garrison there and the use of Egyptian facilities in time of war (Ibid, 381-383). Thus, Britain exerted its hegemony in Egypt and Sudan, and from Kuwait to Aden (Brown, 1984: 113). Furthermore, Britain had strong relations with Sharif Husain since the Arab Revolt in 1916, and supported the appointment of his sons (Faisal and Abdullah) as rulers in Iraq and Trans-Jordan in 1921 (Brown, 1984: 121; Kostiner, 1993:79).

In general, British-French rivalry dominated the region from roughly the end of the First World War until the fall of France in 1940, and their place was taken by the USA and the USSR after the Second World War. The French had good reason to believe that the British were seeking to undermine France's position in the Middle East through their promotion of the Hashemite's designs on Syria. France's conduct in Syria was extremely heavy-handed but was prompted by its fear that Britain was plotting to dominate the entire region. Britain, while supporting the Hashemite thrones, also nurtured ties with Ibn Saud through several treaties and aspired to adjudicating disputes between the two families (Brown, 1984: 116-113). Thus, France lost to Britain diplomatically (Ibid: 123).

As for oil, Iran and Iraq were the most important producers in British eyes. France shared this view, and by the 1930s was the principal buyer of Iraqi oil. France however, was mainly concerned with the Western Mediterranean and with the maintenance of its position in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. For this reason, France was concerned that political developments in Syria and Lebanon might influence Muslims in North Africa. Like Britain, France worked to establish good relations with strong regional powers and safeguarded its interests by treaties (Yapp, 1991:384-385).

Italy emerged from the War with few gains. Its main interests lay in Libya, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and until the 1930s no attempt was made to challenge the British-French's hegemony. After the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, Italy grew more ambitious, but Mussolini was concerned not to offend Britain, and in 1938 the two countries signed the Treaty of Rome designed to settle their differences (Yapp, 1991:386). Only after the fall of France did Italy's ambitions become significant for the region (Ibid: 387).

There are similarities in the involvements of Germany and the USSR during these years. Germany avoided direct political involvement in the Middle East during the 1920s and even under the Nazis its main interest was in Eastern Europe. In the late 1930s, German trade in the Northern Tier (Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan) grew rapidly but was not particularly important to Germany. Germany was uninterested in the region's oil and was unwilling to be drawn into quarrels with Britain, France and Italy (Yapp, 1991:387). The Nazis were also initially sympathetic to Zionism, thinking that Palestine would absorb Germany's unwanted Jews (Ibid: 387-388).

A clear distinction should be drawn between Soviet policy in the Northern Tier and in the Arab World. The USSR had strong interests in the former. Its main concern was not to foment revolution but to expand trade and ensure that no powerful enemy could gain a foothold. By contrast their interest in the Arab World was weak during the inter-war years. Diplomatic relations were opened

with Hijaz in 1924, with Ibn Saud in 1926 and with Yemen in 1928, but little came of these and the missions were closed in 1938 (Yapp, 1991:388-389). In general, the USSR's policy remained without major changes until the Second World War.

The Second World War was by no means as important for the Middle East as the First had been (Yapp, 1991:389). After the War France found itself outmanoeuvred and was forced to quit Syria and Lebanon, which were admitted by the new UN (Brown, 1984: 133). Indeed, the War merely hastened the end of French influence, briefly prolonged that of Britain, and gave an impetus to the advance of the USSR and the USA in the region (Brown, 1984: 104-105; Yapp, 1991: 390). At the end of the War, the leading great powers in the region were Britain and the USSR. Both powers tried and failed to consolidate their positions and, in so doing, drew the USA, which had not been greatly involved hitherto, into playing a much more substantial role (Yapp, 1991:394). It has been claimed that the USA avoided becoming deeply involved in the area as a great power until the Second World War (Brown, 1984: 105).

The Soviet Union had ambitions to gain greater control over Turkey, and pressed claims to Turkish territory. Turkey and Britain appealed to the USA, which reluctantly lent its support, and in October 1946 the USSR backed down. Also, the USSR had invaded northern Iran in 1941 and was reluctant to leave. The USA merely supported Iran at the UN; but Iran outmanoeuvred the Soviets, persuading them to leave in exchange for an oil concession, which never materialised. The USA was not yet ready to involve itself fully in the region, but Soviet influence in the Northern Tier was drastically weakened (Yapp, 1991: 396-397).

Reacting to the Soviet threat, Britain hoped to secure a military and trade confederacy under its leadership, but the key to this strategy, Egypt, refused due to a disagreement over Sudan. Also, popular protests made Iraq equally uncooperative, the British position in Palestine became untenable, and it has been argued that nationalist opposition, more than any other factor, brought about

British failure in the region. Furthermore, Britain had paid a great economic price for victory in the Second World War, and had simply lost the will to maintain its position in the Middle East (Yapp, 1991:399-402). Britain's weakness compelled it to seek the support of the USA, which gave the Americans the opportunity to exert to the full its power and influence in the region (Brown, 1984: 105; Yapp, 1991: 399).

## **1.5 Ibn Saud's Early International Relations**

### **1.5.1 Ibn Saud and the Turks**

After Ibn Saud created his state in the heart of Najd, he was concerned that foreign powers, such as the Ottomans and the British might have an influence on him, although he tried to avoid their intervention in his internal affairs. Philby (1955:265) mentioned that in 1912 the Turks were surrounding Ibn Saud from more than one position. They were occupying al-Hasa in the east and al-Hijaz in the west and surrounding him from the north with their strong ally Ibn Rasheed in Hail, and behind Hail with their presence in Syria and Iraq. This was in addition to their presence in Asir and Yemen.

From the beginning, Ibn Saud was keen not to provoke the Turks for fear that he might repeat what happened to his predecessors when they confronted the powerful Ottoman Empire. However, Turkish policy was, from the beginning, hostile towards Ibn Saud. From the moment he recaptured Riyadh, they considered his action as defiance of their authority and of the authority of their regional ally, Ibn Rasheed, in the region. They feared that the expansion of Ibn Saud's authority might threaten their presence in the occupied regions. This hostile policy was clear from the beginning when the Governor of Basra agreed to support Ibn Rasheed against Ibn Saud in

suppressing what the Governor called the revolution at Najd (Goldberg, 1986:48-66; al-Ghannam, 1999:56).

The Turkish hatred of Ibn Saud became manifest not only through the financial and military support given to his enemy, Ibn Rasheed, but also through the intervention in the conflict between them by sending more than 4500-strong Turkish force, which was well equipped and supported with artillery. They came from Iraq and Hijaz to reinforce Ibn Rasheed against Ibn Saud and to resolve the struggle between them in north Najd, particularly in the al-Qaseem region. The Turks tried to keep al-Qaseem as a neutral province and put it under the direct authority of the Governor of Basra during this struggle.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Rasheed agreed to this because he did not want al-Qaseem to be under Ibn Saud's authority, and his view was shared by some of the al-Qaseem leaders.<sup>2</sup> However, Ibn Saud and the majority of al-Qaseem's population refused this and, as a result, many battles were waged between Ibn Saud, on one side, and the Turks with Ibn Rasheed, on the other, which ended in victory for Ibn Saud.<sup>3</sup> As a result, he achieved complete authority over the whole of the al-Qaseem region and the lands to the north as far as the Shammar mountain frontier (al- Zirikli, 1977a:156-175; Vassiliev, 1998:214-221; al-Ghannam, 1999:61-65).

In 1906, eager to end the Turkish occupation, Ibn Saud was decisive when he discovered the intention of the Turkish commander to move with his army to Hail so as to join Ibn Rasheed. He asked the Turkish commander, Sami Basha al-Farooqi, to choose between two alternatives: either to move with his troops to the south and thus not to join Ibn Rasheed, or Ibn Saud himself would repatriate the Turks who came from Iraq and Hijaz; Ibn Saud threatened al-Farooqi with war if he refused both solutions. This was a very important step that proved the ability of Ibn Saud to act as

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004. Prince Abdulrahman is a nephew of King Abd a-Aziz and a senior member of the Saudi Royal Family; this was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

a powerful leader in the centre of the Arabian Peninsula and also to consolidate his sovereignty. In the event, the Turkish commander chose to repatriate the Turkish troops under the protection of Ibn Saud, who provided them with safe passage and transportation. The Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhameed II, appreciated Ibn Saud's protection and his sincerity towards the Ottoman soldiers. The Sultan also asked him to send one of his people to meet him; Ibn Saud sent Salih al-'Athel. These events in this year were considered as an improvement in the relationship between the two sides (Vassiliev, 1998: 214-221; al- Zirikli, 1977a:156-175; al-Rayhani, 1988:159-164).

After a short period of calm and improvement in the relationship between the Turks and Ibn Saud, new fears arose for Ibn Saud due to Turkish intervention in his affairs. He was told by his envoy, Ahmad al-Thunayyan, that the Governor of Baghdad, Jamal Basha, threatened to invade Najd from the north and head south with two battalions if Ibn Saud did not obey the Turkish will. Ibn Saud then fully understood that the Turkish ambition would not end unless he removed the Turks from al-Hasa and ended their military presence in the region. Ibn Saud informed the British of his intention to secure their neutrality in this struggle. When he saw that the time was right, especially after the Turks were defeated in the Balkan War, he launched a surprise attack at al-Hasa in 1913, ending the presence of the Turks in the Gulf region. After the Turks accepted the reality of the situation and acknowledged that the power of Ibn Saud could not be overlooked, they decided to win him over politically as the signs of the First World War started to appear. At this stage, negotiations started between the Turks and Ibn Saud and ended with Ibn Saud's recognition of the Ottoman Caliph suzerainty over Ibn Saud's territories, and the Turks recognised Ibn Saud's authority over regions under his control and promised to help him financially and militarily. They signed this treaty on 15 May 1914<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a:203-214; Troeller, 1976:43-61; Vassiliev, 1998:231-233; Aghlag, 2002: 127-129&200).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/385, despatch from Terence H. Keyes, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Stuart G. Knox, the Deputy British Political Resident in Bushire, on 30 June 1914; India Office, L/P&S/12/2134, copy of the treaty of 1914 between Ibn Saud and the Turks.

The First World War started in 1914; and the Turks and Britain were not only powerful opponents in this war, but also the most influential powers in the region. Ibn Saud was also a power in the Arabian Peninsula and also had relationships with the two powers. Ibn Saud acknowledged that neutrality was the only policy that would protect him from the intervention of either of the two powers in his internal affairs, or any attack from the victor at the end of the war. Therefore, he adhered to his neutrality during the war, despite both sides' attempts to involve him.<sup>1</sup> His attitude here reflected his principles in dealing with others and it showed the way he wanted to conduct foreign relations. So, initially, in 1914, when Britain tried to get him on its side to oppose the Turkish interests in the region and promised to recognize him as the Caliph, as a reward for his position, he strongly refused and told them then that Sharif Husain deserved to be the Caliph before him, in a bid to stop this attempt to entice him although in 1924 Ibn Saud refused to recognize Sharif Husain as a caliph. Ibn Saud insisted on remaining neutral and not opposing Sharif Husain if the Sharif allied himself with the British against the Turks. Ibn Saud kept his promise with both of the two powers and insisted, at the same time, on full neutrality throughout the war<sup>2</sup> (al- Zirikli, 1977a:215-217; al-Rayhani, 1988:230-231; Goldberg, 1986:178-184).

In 1918, the First World War ended with the Turkish defeat and, as a result, terminated their influence, authority and military presence in the Arabian Peninsula. They were replaced by the British and French in the Arab regions, which were under their occupation. However, when Ibn Saud entered al-Hijaz and united it under his authority and the Hijazi people called him their King, the Republic of Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize this in 1926 (al-Rayhani, 1988:427:429).

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

### 1.5.2 Ibn Saud and the British

When Ibn Saud began to establish his state, there was a strong British presence in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly on the east coast. It was then essential for Ibn Saud to contact them and consequently build a good relationship with them in order to protect his interests and strengthen his authority. Britain observed the struggle between Ibn Saud and Ibn Rasheed, but did not want to be involved in it, due to its concern that if either one of them were to win, his influence might stretch to the countries under British authority in the region, particularly Kuwait. Britain therefore did not want to interfere in such internal affairs in order to avoid provoking Turkish anxieties. The British ignored all Ibn Saud's early approaches, such as in 1902, when he asked if they could sign treaties immediately after the conquest of Riyadh, and advised Britain's allies not to support him (Goldberg, 1986:50-51; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:290; Troeller, 1976:21).

Britain continued its policy towards Ibn Saud even when, in 1904, he asked for help and recognition after his victory in the Battle of al-Bukairiyyah against Ibn Rasheed and the Turks. Britain kept the same neutral policy, despite the recommendation of Sir Percy Cox, the Political Resident in the Gulf that it should deal with Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud continued his attempts to gain Britain's recognition and Cox attempted further to convince his government to recognize Ibn Saud and deal with him. Despite this, all attempts ended in failure, and Britain's response was decisive in 1907, stating that it did not see any necessity to create any kind of relationship with Ibn Saud, out of fear of angering the Turkish Government (Troeller, 1976:22-25; Wahbah, 2000:244-248; alghannam, 1999:58-67).

The situation remained unchanged, so Ibn Saud continued to strengthen his internal position and expand his state in Najd and, with time on his side and increasing numbers of followers, he worked to consolidate his sovereignty and leadership in the



area.<sup>1</sup> There were no changes in his relationship with the British until 1910 when a meeting took place between him and Captain Shakespear, the Political Agent in Kuwait, during his visit to the Amir of Kuwait. The following year, they met again in Ibn Saud's camp. Ibn Saud told Shakespear about his desire to capture al-Hasa in order to end the Turkish presence in the region. He asked Britain to support him and to deal with him as they did with the other Gulf leaders. Shakespear confirmed to Ibn Saud that Britain was unable to be hostile to Turkey for fear of driving it into an alliance with Germany. The British Foreign Office issued orders to the Indian Bureau to stay totally neutral and not to intervene directly or indirectly in the affairs of Najd (Troeller, 1976:22-25; al-Rasheed, 1998:228; Goldberg, 1986, 78:80).

Goldberg (1986:47) stated that all attempts by the British politicians in the Gulf and India to change Britain's attitude toward Ibn Saud since 1904 were strictly rejected by the Foreign Office in London, which favoured the international British interest over the Indian local or regional interests until 1913. This policy was changed just prior to the outbreak of World War I, when Britain began to give more consideration to Ibn Saud and contacted him directly. In fact, the attitude of Britain toward Ibn Saud was a very important factor, which convinced him to strengthen his internal authority in Najd and also expand his state further, especially to the region of al-Hasa. In 1913 Ibn Saud conquered al-Hasa and ended Turkish authority in the east coast region, extending his authority to the Gulf Shaikhdoms, which were under the protection of the British. By doing so, Ibn Saud convinced Britain of two important things: first, he had become the most powerful leader in the area, and secondly, his position was such that he could threaten the provinces under the protection of the British.

Thus, he convinced Britain to change its policy towards him and to take a positive stance, particularly as it had been convinced by its representative in the region that relations with him were essential to the security of the Gulf Shaikhdoms which were under British protection.<sup>2</sup> He was also convinced that he should strengthen his

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> This was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

relationship with Britain, as it was a great power in the region. However, it can be said that the political competition between Britain and Turkey in the region, led both of them to seek Ibn Saud's friendship.<sup>1</sup> Turkey rushed and signed a treaty with Ibn Saud on 15 May 1914. Britain also hastened to radically change its previous stance towards Ibn Saud; and the British Political Agent in Kuwait, Captain Shakespear, came to Riyadh in March 1914, and Britain became closer to him than ever (Troeller, 1976:55-89; Holden and Johns, 1981:47; Vassiliev, 1998:237).

After war between Britain and Turkey was declared in November 1914, the British Government sent to Ibn Saud asking him to coordinate with it in capturing Basra from Turkey. He insisted on speaking personally to the British Political Agent in Kuwait, Captain Shakespear, who met him in December 1914 and who had always been impressed by Ibn Saud. Shakespear was keen to strengthen the relationship with Ibn Saud, but when he met him he found that he insisted on maintaining his neutral position between the Turks and the British. In addition, he also insisted on obtaining a formal treaty between him and Britain before changing his position. Shakespear advised Ibn Saud to draw up a preliminary treaty setting forth his desires and stating what he was ready to accept from Britain. After long discussions they finally signed the Treaty of Darin on 26 December 1915,<sup>2</sup> from which Ibn Saud, however, benefited under the circumstances at the time.<sup>3</sup> One of the articles of this treaty provided for Britain's recognition of Ibn Saud as Sultan of Najd, al-Hasa and its Dependencies, and also the provision of help and protection to him from any external aggression. He committed himself not to conclude treaties with any foreign governments and agreed not to interfere in the affairs of the areas under British protection (Troeller, 1976:55-89; Howarth, 1964:85-89; al-Saud, 2001:26-30). The major result of this treaty was

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<sup>1</sup> This was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/387, copy of the Darin Treaty between Ibn Saud and Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 26 December 1915.

<sup>3</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004; this was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

Britain's agreement to provide Ibn Saud with military protection (Mcloughlin, 1993:87; Wahbah, 2000, 248-249 & 318-319; al-Saud, 2001: 28-30 & 207-217).

During the First World War, unfriendliness in the relations between Britain and Ibn Saud occurred due to the British support for Sharif Husain, especially since Sharif Husain had proclaimed himself King of the Arabs. Despite this unfriendliness, Britain feared that Ibn Saud lend his support to the Turks, or possibly take action against its allies, among them Sharif Husain, which would obstruct its plans in the region. Britain, therefore, offered Ibn Saud a monthly subsidy of £5000 and gave him 3000 rifles to maintain the security and protect British interests in the Gulf. This subsidy was, however, the cause of a cooling in the relationship between Ibn Saud and Britain, as he considered it insufficient, and this was compounded by the fact that Sharif Husain received more. These relations remained unchanged throughout the years of the First World War (Williams, 1933:96102; al- Zirikli, 1977a:285-299; al-Saud, 2001:32-35; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:294-295).

After the end of the First World War, Britain became the most influential power in the region, since Iraq, Palestine and Trans-Jordan now came under its authority. By virtue of this strengthened presence, it became the power that influenced relations between the leaders of the region and Ibn Saud. At the same time, the tense relationship between Ibn Saud and Sharif Husain was coming to a head around al-Khurmah, and the British position was supportive and in favour of Sharif Husain. Britain also broke many promises of support for Ibn Saud regarding armaments and finance and also asked Ibn Saud to leave al-Khurmah to Sharif Husain. Sharif Husain took advantage of this and sent 5000 troops equipped with artillery, under the leadership of his son Abdullah, which led to the Battle of Turabah in 1919 (Philby, 1930:268:272; Mcloughlin, 1993:60-63; Vassiliev, 1998:246-250).

After the decisive defeat of Sharif Husain by Ibn Saud's followers (Ikhwan), led by Khalid Ibn Luway and Sultan Ibn Bijad, and the arrival at Turabah of Ibn Saud at the head of an army of 12000 fighters, Britain threatened Ibn Saud with military action and asked him to halt his advance towards al-Hijaz and return to Riyadh. Since Ibn

Saud had no ambitions in al-Hijaz,<sup>1</sup> and still looked for a favourable relationship with Britain, fearing it might intervene by force in his interests or his internal affairs, he agreed to its demand not to attack al-Hijaz. He also accepted the invitation to participate with Britain and its allies in the victory ceremonies, and sent his son Faisal with two of his consultants, Ahmad al-Thunayyan and Abdullah al-Qusaibi, to London in 1919 (Philby, 1930:268:272; Mcloughlin, 1993:60-63; Vassiliev, 1998:246-250).

From 1920 to 1922, Ibn Saud further consolidated his leadership and sovereignty by extending his authority into Hail and Asir, and also into the north to the al-Sarhan valley area and as far as the Iraqi frontier, at the time when the British supported the appointment of the sons of Sharif Husain (Faisal and Abdullah) as rulers in Iraq and Trans-Jordan in 1921. This had the effect of adding to the number of confrontations in 1920-1922 between the tribes on the frontiers with Kuwait, Iraq and Trans-Jordan. The Saudi forces took part in these confrontations, whether with the agreement of Ibn Saud or without it. Britain, as a result, tried to win Ibn Saud's support, knowing that these tribes would only obey him and that using force to punish these tribes and stop their aggression would cost it much.<sup>2</sup> Britain worked to win him over to secure its interests and stop the aggression in the areas under its authority (Philby, 1948:219-222; Troeller, 1976:159-167; Kostiner, 1993:79-87).

All of these issues convinced Ibn Saud and Britain of their need to strengthen their relationship. Britain continued its financial support, increasing it further, and also it insisted on drawing the borders between Ibn Saud and each of Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Kuwait on behalf of which the British were acting. As a result, Sir Percy Cox called for a meeting at al-Muhammarah in May 1922. However, Ibn Saud did not accept the proposed al-Muhammarah Treaty due to the fact that his representative had gone beyond his authorisation. Another meeting was arranged, taking place in al-'Uqair,

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<sup>1</sup> This was also maintained by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; also, this was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

and again chaired by Cox, with Ibn Saud representing Najd and its Dependencies, Sabih Bey representing the Iraqi Government and Major More, the Political Agent in Kuwait, representing the Kuwaiti Government. The meeting ended with the signing of the Treaty of al-'Uqair in November 1922, which drew the borders between the three countries, resolving the dispute between them regarding the loyalty of tribes in the border areas, and the problems of the shepherds in these areas. One of the most important points was that Britain agreed that Qurayyat al-Melh and the al-Sarhan valley belonged to Abdulaziz (Troeller, 1976:159-179; Kostiner, 1993:79-87).

The Hashemite families in Iraq, Trans-Jordan and al-Hijaz who were under the protection of Britain disagreed with Ibn Saud about the frontiers, despite the al-'Uqair Agreement, especially after more frontier confrontations took place with Trans-Jordan and Hijaz and also in view of the sympathy felt by King Faisal of Iraq towards his father and his brother. This forced Britain to call a conference in Kuwait between Ibn Saud and the leaders of these three countries. The conference took place in December 1923, but they did not reach a solution, due to the exaggeration of the Hashemite demands. Ibn Saud understood from this conference that the three countries were working together to destroy him,<sup>1</sup> so he decided to take al-Hijaz, as described previously (Kostiner, 1993:87-100; Wahbah, 2000:257-263).

Howarth (1964:141) mentioned that Ibn Saud was hesitant to occupy al-Hijaz even though he had been convinced of his ability to do so years before (since the victory of Turabah in 1919). He was hesitant because he knew that capturing al-Hijaz would not be as easy as the other regions, and he knew that occupying al-Hijaz would end his isolation from the world and bring him closer to powerful countries, particularly those who had consuls in al-Hijaz. Also, control of the Holy Places would bring him closer to the Muslim world, especially during the al-Hajj season, and all of this would turn his chieftaincy into a state, bring him into the diplomatic world and enhance his communication with the outside world as a head of state. However, some historians have argued that the ending of British subsidies to both, Ibn Saud and Sharif Husain,

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<sup>1</sup> Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 236, 5 July 1929, and Issue No. 389, 27 May 1932.

was a major reason for Ibn Saud's decision to invade al-Hijaz.<sup>1</sup> In 1923, the British Government told them both of its final decision to cut off the payments. With the ending of British financial support, Ibn Saud had no reason to be afraid of British displeasure (Howarth, 1964:138-139; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 151; Kostiner, 1993: 62). Vassiliev (1998:287) argues that "*Britain's increasingly weak economic position meant it was unable to establish direct control over a sizeable part of Arabia, which now seemed a costly burden: this too was conducive to Ibn Saud's success*".<sup>2</sup> He might better have said "financial position".

Sharif Husain's rejection of the Anglo-Hijaz treaty, proposed by London in 1923, was one of his fatal mistakes. However his clear opinion against the Mandate, which resulted from the Peace Conference at Versailles, and his rejection of the British plan regarding Palestine and its people implied in the Balfour Declaration, was the main reason behind his refusal to sign the Anglo-Hashemite treaty. Britain attempted many times to persuade him to change his position but he completely refused, while demanding that Britain should fulfil all its promises to him before and during the Arab Revolt.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Britain saw that his assumption of the title of Caliph in 1924 might give the impression that Britain supported him in his claim. By doing so, he missed the chance to secure his sovereignty and strengthen his relationship with Britain so that it would support him against the new threat that he had created by his policy of preventing Ibn Saud's followers (Ikhwan) from performing their Hajj.<sup>4</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup> His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz strongly rejected the role of the economic factor as a reason for the occupation of al-Hijaz, due to the fact that al-Hijaz was economically poor and would place more financial burdens on Ibn Saud. He insisted that the only motivation was a religious one. This was during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz also rejected this, arguing that Britain was not financially weak to such an extent that it would force it to abandon or change its strategies in this important area. This was during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003 and 1 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>4</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak, during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; this was also supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

all these reasons, Britain left him to his fate at a time when he was powerless and bankrupt (Mousa, 1978:183-194; Baker, 1979:144-170; al-Rayhani, 1988:342; Wahbah, 2000:199). The elimination of the Hashemite rule in al-Hijaz gave Ibn Saud a unique position, which convinced Britain to deal with him as the only effective power in the Arabian Peninsula.

When it was clear to Britain that al-Hijaz was going to fall into the hands of Ibn Saud and that he might move north from al-Hijaz, it took the initiative and sent, in October 1925, Sir Gilbert Clayton, who had earlier been the Chief Secretary to the Government in Palestine, to negotiate with Ibn Saud with a view to end the frontier problems with Trans-Jordan and Iraq, which had not been resolved during the Kuwait Conference. After long negotiations, they finally agreed, in November 1925, to sign the Treaty of Bahrah,<sup>1</sup> to end the frontier problems between the governments of Najd and Iraq and also the problems of the tribes living on the frontiers. They also, in the same month, signed the Treaty of Haddah,<sup>2</sup> that drew the frontiers between Najd and Trans-Jordan, specifying the relations between them. When Ibn Saud entered Jeddah and completed the unification of al-Hijaz, he was accepted as the King of al-Hijaz in January 1926. All the consuls in Jeddah recognised him, including the British Consul. The unification of al-Hijaz with Najd was the cornerstone in the relations between Ibn Saud and Britain. This, and the demise of the other leaders in the area, especially Sharif Husain, convinced Britain to develop its relations with Ibn Saud and to recognise his independence. So in 1927, Clayton came back to Jeddah and proposed a new treaty to be signed by Ibn Saud and Britain. The Treaty of Jeddah was duly signed on 20 May 1927,<sup>3</sup> abrogating the Treaty of Darin, which had been signed on

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Government, Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, Makkah, 1922-1951.Pp.10-13; India Office, L/P&S/20/CI58E, copy of the Treaty of Bahrah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton dated 1 November 1925.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951.Pp.14-18; India Office, L/P&S/20/CI58E, copy of the Treaty of Bahrah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton dated 2 November 1925.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951.Pp.33-43; India Office, L/P&S/10/1166, copy of the Treaty of Jeddah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton dated 20 May 1927.

26 December 1915. One of the terms of the Jeddah Treaty was the full recognition of Ibn Saud's independence by Britain (Vassiliev, 1998:263-275; Troeller, 1976:227-236).



## **Chapter Two: International Relations and the Foreign**

### **Policy of New States: An evaluative review of the literature**

*"Foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment"* (George Modelski in Kegly and Wittkopf, 2001:54).

There are over 200 states in the international community. All states confront the question, which in Calvert's view (1986:53) is: *"What is a typical country?"* Calvert (ibid) added: *"That is one of the most difficult questions in the world to answer. Typical in what respect? In population, in area, in military potential, in economic resources, or what?"* It would seem that there is no clear answer to this question, hence the difficulty in differentiating accurately between states. However, an answer to the above question would pose some difficulties, especially regarding newly established states. What is clear, however, is that a state would need an atmosphere of international acceptability in order to become a member of the international community.

Most debates on foreign policy issues are centred on national interest. The state usually defines which interests are important and to be defended at all costs, and which could, if necessary, be sacrificed. Hence, the primary task for those responsible for formulating foreign policy is, to articulate their national interests in some logical order of importance. Newly emerging states need to overcome some major problems in order to achieve their foreign policy goals in relation to the international community of states, as will be discussed below.

## 2.1 Types of Newly Emerging States

A newly emerging state may fall into one of the following categories. In the first category, there are states that split from other states. They could split from fully established states, such as in the case of the disintegration of former Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and that of the states of the former Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). States could also split from newly established states, such as the case of Pakistan and India in 1947. In the former group, states could establish their relations with the international community more successfully because they would face fewer problems, in view of their long experience after having been part of established states.

In the second category, states may merge together to form a new state. They could be already established states like East and West Germany, which formed a unified Germany in 1990, or less developed countries such as North and South Yemen, united to form one state in 1990. Again, states in the former group usually find it easier to adjust to membership of the international community. With certain reservations, Saudi Arabia could be included under this category.

The third category contains states which have achieved independence from a colonial master, such as Tunisia in 1956, the Marshall Islands and Palau, both former Trust Territories administered by the United States, which gained full independence in 1991, and Micronesia (formerly known as the Caroline Islands and also administered by the United States), which gained complete sovereignty in 1991.

In the fourth category, two or more newly emerging states may unite together to form a newly emerging state, such as the emirates of the Arabian Gulf, when they united together to form the United Arab Emirates in 1971.

In the fifth category, a national liberation movement may become a new full state such as Eritrea, which separated from Ethiopia in 1993, and Namibia, which separated from South Africa in 1990. Or a national liberation movement may aspire to become a state, such as the Palestinian case.

States which fall under the fourth and fifth categories confront more political problems in their foreign policy, which hinder the establishment of good and effective relationships with the international community, while states falling under the third category occupy an intermediate position with regard to the effective management of their foreign policy. This chapter will discuss the major foreign policy problems that confront newly established states and assess their impact on them.

## **2.2 Problems of Foreign Policy Confronting Newly Emerging States**

### **2.2.1 Establishing a New National Identity**

According to Oyvind (1997:167) the state system expanded through three major periods in the twentieth century. The first period came after the collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires as a result of World War One. Eventually, successor states multiplied, depending on the different nationalities which were under the control of these empires and the policies of the new occupying powers. The second period started with decolonisation during the late 1950s. The last period began with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many scholars argue that nationalism has been a recent phenomenon, dating mostly from the late eighteenth century. Smith (1991:71) quoted Kedourie: "*Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century*". The importance of nationalism cannot be underestimated in relation to the citizens of the modern era. Nationalism is simply one element of the

modern world that must be regarded as essential for the realisation of the social, economic, and cultural aspirations of a people.

Nationalism, arguably, began in Western Europe as a force associated with the policies of colonialism and imperialism of Western European countries. Here was certainly the first powerful manifestation of this sentiment. One of the significant legacies of colonialism, as Breacher indicated (1963:21) was its spread to other parts of the world, from the newly formed countries of Latin America and from Central Europe to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. By the beginning of the twentieth century, nationalism was spreading its effects on the ancient nations of Asia and Africa. Historically, the movement towards nationalism was fostered by a combination of various cultural, political, and economic factors. In general, nationalism could be described, principally, as a feeling of community among a people who share their own particular identity. This feeling of identity and a sense of belonging together are based on the fact that this group of people share a common descent, common language, common cultural heritage or some combination of these or like factors (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001:205). However, among the most important of these factors were the improvements in communications at the beginning of the twentieth century that tended to extend the knowledge of people beyond their village or province. In the industrial stage, through the educational system, people learned of their common background and tradition and began to identify themselves with the historical continuity of the nation. At the same time, new culture-congruent politics emerged (Gellner, 1983:35). Perhaps even more important in the steady rise of nationalism was the introduction of national constitutions (which often came about through a struggle for political rights) that gave people the necessary help to determine their fate as a nation and share responsibility for the future well-being of that nation.

Once the political ideal of nationalism began, it was reinforced, not only by the growing strength of central, federalised governments, but by other elements of society as well. National education systems began to be established; in addition, poets, artists, academics and religious scholars began to emphasise cultural rights and promote

nationalism (Kedourie, 1993:42). Some scholars see nationalism as that sentiment which the people strongly feel toward their own nation without any concern for the common interest of other nations and states in the world (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001:427). Thus, at the beginning of their life of new states may have to borrow some lessons from more developed states. In the realm of nationalism, each nation may replicate the steps taken by other nations which had travelled the path to self-determination.

However, in addition to nationalism as an essential element of national identity, historical, territorial, economic, and cultural factors play their roles, in some form or other, in the development of a state identity (Smith, 1991:8-15). This can be seen in the Arab Gulf States, whereby, in addition to sharing a common Arabic-Islamic culture, they also have an individual cultural heritage, history, territory, and economy, which have given each state its own distinct identity. After adopting this distinct identity, they were able, firstly, to establish themselves as independent states, and secondly, as a result of this national identity, were able to formulate and implement their respective foreign policies in relation to the international community.

However, a huge obstacle may be faced by any state in identifying itself through the perspective of territorial integrity, especially if it had a historical territorial problem with a large neighbour. A good example of this is the state of Kuwait. Since acquiring its independence in 1961, it has had a difficult relationship with its large neighbour Iraq. Ever since its independence, Kuwait has faced continuous problems from Iraq, which led to Kuwait seeking the help from Britain and the League of Arab States. This ongoing problem precipitated the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991. Any state facing such a problem would be under pressure in the formulation and implementation of its foreign policy. Moreover, as a way of enhancing its identity, a state is likely to become more possessive of its economic wealth. A state which has good economic resources would have more freedom to assert itself and practise its foreign policy according to its economic capability, whilst poorer states would have less freedom and might align themselves with other states in implementing their foreign policy.

Nevertheless, an identity-enhancing foreign policy has its problems. While there are many benefits to an ideology of nationalism, there are certainly many drawbacks as well, the most important of which being the fact that nationalist feelings seem to propel people toward violence. Kurlansky (1999:5) states: "*Europeans learned in the twentieth century to fear themselves and their passions. They distrust nationalism and religious belief because pride in nationality leads to dictatorship, war, disaster, and religion leads to fanaticism. Europe has become the most secular continent*". In some cases, a strong sense of nationalism led some states to feel that, in order to remain strong, they had to make other states weak (Primakov, 1996:58).

Hence, in the modern era, the establishment of national identity is a difficult road for newly established countries to traverse, and it is even more difficult for recently independent states, or for those peoples who are still trying to gain national autonomy. Nevertheless, a new identity remains an irreplaceable instrument for any newly emerging state that would guide its relations with the international community. Such a new state, where people are beginning to define themselves in terms of their national identity, would initially encounter difficulties in formulating and implementing its foreign policy in a clear fashion.

### **2.2.2 Political Structure and Foreign Policy Institutions**

In formulating their foreign policy, new states have to contend with both the changing role of the nation state and their own limitations. One of these limitations is the lack of political structure and full-fledged governmental institutions. The lack of adequate governmental institutions in newly emerging states, would make it difficult for them to conduct an effective administration. The establishment of institutions is a fundamental task of any government at the early stage of any newly emerging state. The task becomes more significant in the case of political institutions during the early foundation process of the new state. Basically, as Bialer (1980:70) states: "*A higher level of institutionalisation of political processes provides a stabilising background for the coming succession*".

Political institutions would help to gather, interpret and channel information, and, at the same time, establish guidelines for foreign policy makers. Political institutions in the area of foreign policy, such as foreign ministries, embassies, and all the diplomatic structures have been essential elements in the process of foreign policy making since the eighteenth century up today (Holsti, 1983:163). Building institutional structures is a very difficult task for a newly emerging state to accomplish, because it involves many important elements such as developed political parties, legislatures, judicial system, education and human resource development, clear rules of conduct, and supporting both national and regional guarantees of human rights and consistent, explicit rules of conduct (Lindenberg, 1990:421).

States would find it difficult to build their relations with others prior to constructing their political institutions. The problems of new nations are magnified in those areas of the world in which national movements are still trying to gain their independence. An example of this case would be the Palestinian situation. Palestinians are still striving to establish their own state. They have the basic elements in terms of a strong attachment to their culture, language, history and land, and a strong desire to achieve their own independent state. But one of the main obstacles in establishing an independent state is the absence of political structure and institutions. It can be seen that a major task of Arafat in the West Bank and Gaza strip is to construct a political base (Robinson, 1997:181).

Some theorists see the political structure as a structure of shared political values, which would define the political conditions and support the political goals of the members of the state (Pateman, 1971:295). However, some political theorists insist that political structure should start from the very early stages as an important step in building societal structures and political orientations. Parsons (1951:203-208) argues: *"The major value orientation patterns, including presumably the political orientations, are laid down in childhood. These form the core of the basic structure of personality"*. Political science theorists tend to agree that political socialisation is an important process continuing throughout life, but the priority has been for the emphasis to be placed on the early years. Dawson and Prewitt (1969:56) state: *"New*

*orientations are acquired, but in most instances they occur within bounds established by the deep and persistent orientations acquired during childhood". They suggest: "The adult is unlikely to alter the more basic orientations such as his conception of the legitimate means of selecting political rulers, or broad ideological goals".*

It is clear then that states formed through separation from or merging with less developed states, as well as liberation movements, suffer from a lack of political structure and governmental institutions, including foreign policy institutions. This is a major problem that hinders the establishment of good and effective relationships with the international community. An example of this has been Eritrea after its separation from Ethiopia. States emerging from colonial rule face slightly fewer problems with regard to political structure and governmental institutions, in view of the fact that the colonial powers would have left them with some structures. States formed through the merging or separation of developed states benefit from the existing governmental institutions and the presence of an established political structure in these countries, which would be instrumental in their successfully establishing foreign relations with others and becoming full members of the international community.

It could be said then that the more governmental institutions and the more well-established political structure the newly emerging states have, the easier it would be for them to successfully establish their relations with others. States without this fundamental element of political structure and institutions would not be able to conduct their foreign policy successfully. Thus, one of the most difficult and important tasks of a newly emerging state is to ensure that it has at least the basic political structure and institutions to conduct its foreign policy, which is an essential step that would link it to the international community.



### 2.2.3 Leadership

Leadership and foreign policy making are strongly linked. The action of a leader can be fairly judged only in relation to his or her context. The international community is becoming increasingly complex, interrelated and interdependent, and is characterised by diversity of cultures and values. An effective leader is the one who is able to successfully handle his or her state's foreign policy in relation to the international community. In general, a particular leader emerges because of the political needs of the state. The leader is a political specialist who is able to make the political system work effectively for the ordinary citizen who has little interest in politics but cannot survive without it (Jones, 1979:48). The leader should, therefore, embrace as many qualities as the ordinary citizen needs. He or she is expected to have a broad and sound conceptual framework that enables him or her to conduct the country's foreign policy.

In general, national revolutionary movements have the ultimate goal of establishing a state and they try to furnish a leadership capable of achieving this goal. Kissinger (1969:17-43) says: *"In the early stages of nationhood, these goals can be seen largely as an attempt to put into effect the dreams and aspirations of revolutionary leaders, supported by strong nationalist movements. Bureaucracies in these states are weak and undifferentiated, and lack tradition. Thus, objectives, decisions, and actions largely reflect the ideas and whims of single individuals, often leaders of nationalist revolutionary movements"*. However, national movements have played a significant role in political history and continue to do so. When a national movement is transformed into a state, the leadership of this movement would already have the legitimacy and credibility to direct the foreign policy of the newly formed state. Moreover, from the leadership's point of view, the study of national movements and their dynamics is fundamental to the study of the political process itself (Tucker, 1987:16).

The political system is complicated and is very difficult to mobilise, but the effective leader can make it work through his influence on his people. However, only the

leader who understands internal relations within his community can appreciate the effect that he has on them. Jones (1979: 48-49) states: *"The leader could make it work for his lineage and for his individual clients because he had made it his business to understand how to manipulate it. He could do this mainly because he could influence people, both ordinary folk and other leaders like himself. These people were prepared to do what he wanted because they respected his capacity and judgment, and because they feared his power"*.

Leadership entails responsibility for self and others, and this responsibility is mutual between the leader and members of the community. In dealing with the affairs of his people, a leader should endeavour to gain a broad complete picture of all his community and work hard to achieve its goals as a whole unit. The leader must gain the support of various groups in the community, in order to be 'the leader of all his people' (Tucker, 1987:13). In the context of their debate about leadership, international relations scholars discuss, not only different kinds of states, such as democracies, transitional democracies, and autocracies, but also how the leadership and its relations with domestic political pressures could help to define the state, whether it is strong, weak, stable, unstable, cohesive, fragmented, etc., and how all these things would effect its foreign policy and its relations with others.

Some writers focus on particular leaders and evaluations of their leadership. But generally, the perspectives of the leaders involved in foreign policy making can have more influence on what governments do, and sometimes some of the government members shift toward the leader's inclinations just because of his influence as their leader (Kesselman, 1961:285). However, the influence in case of foreign policy making is mutual because the leader is also under the pressure of his people or a sector of them. Wesson (1977:183) indicates that *"It seems clear that there is or has been an elite of very influential persons with the best business, legal, academic, and governmental connections, who were again and again called upon to give foreign policy directions"*.

Moreover, any change in top leadership positions, which can be considered as new blood in the leadership or at least bringing to power new and younger leaders, certainly means new changes in priorities and policies. According to Bunce (1981:255) "*New leaders mean new policies and old leaders mean the continuation of old priorities- it is almost as simple as that*". Some theorists even believe that a difference in the gender of the leader could affect the foreign policy of his or her state. In general, Almond (1950:121) found that "*More women than men seem to be ignorant of or apathetic to foreign policy issues*", but there are always exceptions, such as Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Ghandi. According to surveys of foreign policy views, carried out by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relation, the foreign policy beliefs of women and men converge at the leadership positions or at least there are no significant differences (Holsti and Rosenau, 1981:327-328).

In the case of an emerging state, leadership arguably becomes more important. Without a strong and charismatic leader, a new state would essentially have no chance of establishing itself on the world stage. One such example was Stalin, who, as an early leader of the Soviet Union, shaped its nature and fate for most of the twentieth century. Stalin was a quintessential nationalist leader because he spent so much energy and effort on crafting a state mechanism. Stalin, more than any other individual, shaped the Soviet regime and influenced the direction of post-World War II developments in Europe. This influence was global during the early years of the Cold War, which was a primary factor in world politics after the Second World War. This was because of his ability to provide a reasonable basis for his policies, and from it he drew his ultimate conclusions (Bukharin, 1972:144). One would ask what would have been the face of the Soviet Union without Stalin? The answer remains in the realm of speculation.

History is rich with many effective leadership figures. An example of an important fighter for the independence of his country was Charles de Gaulle, the man who dedicated every ounce of energy and talent that he possessed to securing the freedom of a New France after World War II. This supremely self-confident statesman, who always was a tireless servant of France, firmly believed himself to have been marked

out by destiny to bear France on his shoulders and guide her upwards, while all voices continued to call her down (Cairns, 1976:164). De Gaulle's influence was not limited to his people only; it expanded over Europe and all of France's colonies, most of which acquired their independence as a result of his new foreign policy. Thus charismatic and effective leadership is the cornerstone of a newly emerging state, not only in the making of its foreign policy, but also in its playing an influential role in its region and in the international community. Arguably, a good example of this was President Nasser of Egypt, who advocated Pan-Arabism, and who was quoted by Vatikiotis (1961:107-108) as having emphasised that Arab nationalism had revived the aspiration for "independence and freedom" among the Arabs, and supported liberation movements. Through this policy, Egypt had a great influence on the Arab world during his era (ibid: 107-108 &110).

Therefore, it must be emphasised that an effective leadership is an essential element for any newly emerging state, without which it could not adopt an effective foreign policy or enhance its ability to influence the international community.

#### **2.2.4 Political Instability**

The internal political stability of a newly emerging state will have an important impact on its foreign policy conduct. Scholars of international relations have pointed to the importance of the impact that domestic factors have on foreign policy making and implementation (Rosenau, 1969: 54). Among these factors is the effect of internal political stability, which applies to both newly emerging as well as fully established states.

The stability of new states is dependent upon a number of factors; primarily, in the case of some, the various relationships among different ethnic groups, and between these groups and the state. The state endeavours to melt these various ethnic groups into a single block, with the objective of generating a sense of belonging to the newly

emerging nation state. Competition between ethnic groups can lead to major problems in the implementation of foreign policy (Wesson, 1977:182). However, factionalism between groups can be ethnic or otherwise. For example, in Lebanon during its Civil War from 1975-1990, the various factions did not have a common feeling of belongingness to the state due to the differences in sectarian affiliations which affected their national loyalties. This inevitably led to instability and as a result, war and problems in the conducting of Lebanon's foreign policy.

Relations between ethno-cultural minorities and majorities in societies in different countries have always been uneasy and often conflictual. Moreover, such conflicts have often been characterised as intractable and deep-rooted, because of problems between the majority and the minority, the way they perceive their culture and the threats directed towards their existence. Almond and Verba (1965:33) state: "*The relationship between political culture and political structure is one of the most significant researchable aspects of the problem of political stability and change*". Moreover, the political culture of those fragmented communities refers not only to what is happening in the world of politics, but also to what they believe about those happenings. Those beliefs could be the goals or values which ought to be pursued by their state in its foreign policy (Anyanwu, 1982:109). Moreover, these beliefs may have an important emotional dimension with respect to the external environment, which may lead to political instability. External political actors, including other states, may have an important influence; they may either cause or restrain political instability in any neighbouring state (Lindenberg, 1990:402).

The problem of political instability can be serious if the central authority or government has not had adequate time and power to enforce its effective control and sovereignty over its entire territory. Moreover, the legitimacy of the leadership or central government in the eyes of some sectors of its citizens may not yet be established. An example of this has been Indonesia and East-Timor. The East-Timorese people worked for separation for years, and they asked for help from neighbours, which affected Indonesia's internal stability and its foreign policy as well. Such a situation gives neighbouring states a chance to interfere.

Moreover, conflicts may arise between the interests of different groups or sectors of the community. Competition between these groups simply intensifies mutual dislike, which further foments political instability. When these interests cannot be reconciled through legal constitutional means and channels, especially in the absence of a strong government, differences can turn into violent clashes between the groups, sometimes leading to civil wars, as has been the case in former Yugoslavia. When this country became unstable and was engulfed in civil war between its ethnic groups, it lost its strong position in Europe and even its closest former allies.

Sometimes, regimes face strong internal opposition which could threaten the internal stability of the state, such as in Algeria during the civil strife since 1992, and the question of the South in Sudan. In order to preserve national unity or secure domestic stability, governments may undertake foreign adventures. Wright (1965: 140) states: "*A ruler prevents seditions by making external wars*". An example of this is the case of Pakistan and India. They run their foreign policy with other states normally, but they are engaged in a dispute over Kashmir dating back to more than 50 years, which has impacted on the internal stability of both nations. If India gave up Kashmir this might lead to other ethnic groups calling for independence, which could eventually lead to the disintegration of India. India's determination to maintain its internal stability has influenced its foreign policy towards its neighbour, Pakistan. Pakistan and India have been involved in three major wars because of Kashmir, and because of this they have developed nuclear weapons. A main reason behind their mutual foreign policy behaviour is to maintain their internal stability.

Moreover, domestic political actors or groups, such as labour organisations, multinational corporations, political elites and political parties have identifiable preferences about the conduct of their countries' foreign policies. Those domestic groups who benefit from international market forces or already have strong international ties will favour greater international openness and stability and press their governments to enact policies that promote such characteristics. The more such groups there are, domestically, the greater would be the pressure on policymakers to orient their policies in this direction. Hence, the more stability they have, the more

benefits they accrue. Holsti (1983:335) states: *“Some foreign-policy objectives, decisions, and actions are formulated or taken to fulfil general social needs and advance more specific interests of domestic groups, political parties, and economic organizations”*.

Perhaps no feature of the study of foreign policy is more difficult to generalise about than the relationship of public opinion to the government’s external objectives and diplomatic behaviour (Holsti, 1983:342). This means there will be a greater pressure on governments and policymakers regarding their definition and the implementation of their foreign policy at the international level. The relationship between government and pressure groups shapes the foreign policy preferences of a state and its capacity to implement these preferences. As Kissinger (1969:41) says: *“The international arena provides an opportunity for taking dramatic foreign-policy measures that are impossible at home”*.

Thus, the stability of a new state is an underlying factor upon which its foreign policy is built. A state without political stability would not be able to conduct a successful, strong and effective foreign policy and establish desirable international relations.<sup>1</sup> However, according to Bialer (1980:130) *“A politically stable country is not necessarily at the same time socially, culturally, or economically stable. The instability of leadership does not necessarily assume general political instability”*.

### **2.2.5 Economic Resources**

Politics and economy have always been related to each other. In general, it can be said that there is a strong link between the economy and foreign policy. Scholars argue that the economic factor always influences foreign policy making. Since

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<sup>1</sup> This view, which is advocated by the present author, has been also supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

decision makers formulate and execute foreign policy objectives according to the images they have of the relative power of their state in comparison with other states, the economy of the state becomes an important determinant of foreign policy making (Dawisha, 1977:56). In addition, Smith (1989:192) says "*The wealth and sophistication of national societies have always been a significant element in the study of foreign policies, and the competition for markets or resources has been a major focus of foreign policy activity for centuries*".

Scholars have therefore focused on the economy in explaining a state's foreign policy choices. In many cases, they believe that the right choices are the most important factor shaping the nature of international economic relations. For example, in term of needs, and in order to protect their economies, states have to choose between setting their exchange rates, giving foreign aid, or acting in the light of other states' political interests. As Holsti (1983:151) states "*A country that needs something from another is vulnerable to its acts of influence*". Moreover, scholars have paid attention as to why certain states grow rapidly and develop over time, while others fail to do so or decline, and how that affects their power in international affairs. The changing positions of states in the world economy would also affect their positions in the international community and their ability to influence international affairs, because economic affairs are mingled with the political and states cannot entirely shut themselves off from the international open economic order (Wesson, 1977:100-101).

Thus, some countries are committed to an active role in international affairs under the pressure of their needs for economic resources, because a lack of resources is likely to cause a shift in their foreign policy, especially in the case of newly emerging states. However, even developed countries have come under such pressure. For example, the Japanese government came under Arab pressure because of its lack of oil resources; it took up a position on the Arab-Israeli conflict which was more acceptable to conservative Arab states. This included the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In the long term, Japan has found very valuable markets in the Middle East open to it for the first time, but the initial and the



most important aim was basically to sustain the flow of Arab oil (Farrands, 1989:92-93).

The subject of international political economy came into prominence after World War II. What became more important in the 1970s and 1980s was the growth of global interdependence between the rich countries and the poor. It can be seen that the rich countries with highly developed economic institutions and sufficient resources face different problems from those newly emerging countries with new and fragile economy (Smith, 1989:192). For less developed countries, the economic issues are more crucial for their foreign policy, for they are very directly constrained by the need to conserve resources and, in large part, by the external aspects of economic policy (Hill, 1977:5).

The purposes or goals that states choose to pursue with their resources should not come in conflict with international economic policies. The impact of powerful economic blocs, such as the European Union, the USA and international economic organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF),<sup>1</sup> World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Bank,<sup>2</sup> could affect those states' economies and their foreign policies, and the situation could become more serious in case of newly emerging states. Such institutions and blocs have the power and means to reshape economic flows. However, the US Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin, complained at the 1999 Summit of high-powered political and business leaders in Davos, Switzerland, that there were "*no easy answers and no magic wands for overhauling financial institutions to make the world safe for global capitalism*" (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001:280).

The economic gap between rich and poor classes and countries is currently widening and is creating political tensions within individual nation states and those economic blocs mentioned above. This has influenced calls for integration between states of the same region, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/noland0298.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Mercosur Free-Trade zone in the cone of South America, and the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arabian Gulf States, in order to strengthen their position economically and politically (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001:280-281). This shows how domestic economies ought to be run and how they ought to relate to the rest of the world economy (Brown, 2001:188-189).

All nations, both old and new, today operate from a clear economic reality that there is interdependence between national economies. For example, when a nation cuts taxes on imports in order to encourage domestic demand, it stimulates the markets in other countries or nations, by increasing its own imports and raising the exports of the other countries. The stronger the economy of a given nation today, the greater the influence it would have on other countries. The global market further confirms the need for interdependence in terms of access to capital, information, technology and markets. It is extremely difficult for a newly established nation to gain a foothold in a large market like the EU or the USA without the negotiating strength that comes from having a large economy. However, newly emerging states without the appropriate economic institutions and stable foreign policy would find it difficult to enter the global market, as the customs and trading rules in modern economy restrict access to such global markets. An example of this is the ex-Communist countries, where the economic systems are completely different (Coase, 1992:714).

The huge flows of capital around the world are also extremely unsettling to any national economy. Under the influence of the World Bank, many nations have opened themselves up to these international flows of capital with some destructive results. For example, the severity of the Asian financial crisis in 1998, which affected the economies of most countries in South-East Asia,<sup>1</sup> has prompted the World Bank to advocate controls on international capital movements. The other way for a newly emerging nation state to protect itself from being adversely affected by the operation of the international capital markets is to seek protection through a main foreign

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/noland0298.htm>; [http://www.adb.org/Documents/EDRC/Staff\\_Papers/ESP060.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/EDRC/Staff_Papers/ESP060.pdf).

currency such as the Dollar or the new Euro. An example of this is the decision of the Egyptian Government to link its currency exchange rate with the US Dollar.

It is thus clear that a state with limited economic resources would be obliged to shape its foreign policy in line with other economically powerful states, in order to secure and protect its interests. On the other hand, rich countries tend to orient their foreign policy towards newly emerging states in ways that promote their foreign interests or secure agreements with them in needed areas.

### **2.2.6 The Colonial Legacy**

The first wave of colonialism began in the late fifteenth century, as the Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish used their military power to conquer territories for commercial gain (Zavala, 1961: 925). Beginning in the 1870s and extending until the outbreak of World War I, a second wave of imperialism expanded over different part of the world as Europe, joined later by the United States and Japan, aggressively colonized new territories. However, the end of colonialism was one of the most remarkable developments in twentieth-century world politics (Smith, 1989:192). Since World War II, and by the late 1980s, more than 120 new states have emerged, many of them former colonies (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001: 125-131).

Although in Lundgren's view (1992: 86), formal colonization does not exist in today's newly emerging states, it continues to function in the form of a complex and multilevel socialization process, which serves to reinforce colonial unequal relations of power and an ideology of the colonizer's superiority. Such a colonization process is humanly harmful, unjust, and dangerous (ibid: 87). Historically, the incorporation of distinct societies under capitalism proceeded by means of the conquest, domination and enslavement of alien peoples, followed by the socioeconomic restructuring of the dominated society in order to install new forms of production or exploit former productive activities. The fundamental objective of this restructuring was to send the

incorporated society into the expansionist world economy as part of its productive system. This was commonly followed by the diffusion of the colonizer's cultural tradition (Magubane, 1979:169).

In this context, many scholars have regarded the colonization process as having deprived people of their land, their labour, their resources and their dignity. This has meant the enrichment of Euro-American and European elites and the corresponding under-enrichment of Africans and other Third World peoples (Nadell, 1995:448; Lundgren, 1992:86). Nadell (1995: 448) cited Fanon as saying: "*The wealth of the Europeans is our wealth too. Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from underdeveloped peoples*". Rodney was quoted by Nadell (1995:448) as arguing that colonialism "*meant the development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped*". Moreover, Saakana (1987: 9) states: "*The colonial process, like its capitalist parentage, is one of massive theft and robbery*". Colonization also threatened, through slavery, to rob some colonized peoples of one of their most critical resources, the next generation (Lundgren, 1992:86).

However, as Osterhammel (1997:107) notes, one should taken into account the fact that "*Not all whites in the colony were also colonial rulers*". He also quotes Albert Memmi when he pointed out that "*Not every coloniser became a colonist; there was also the coloniser with good intention, who tried to avoid crass exercise of power or who even fought against the colonial system*" (Ibid: 107). Hence, instead of seeing colonialism simply as a cause of deprivation and a means of exploitation, it should be acknowledged that some colonial powers have participated in the construction of their colonies, as Clapham (1977:77) indicates, by spreading the colonial language, building roads, establishing a cash economy, educating people and even recruiting them into the army and civil administration. He adds that the colonial powers created groups for whom the colonial territory was a major enabler of social, economic and, ultimately, political activity. What is especially significant about this process, from the viewpoint of future foreign policy, was the way in which each step increased linkage with the outside world, and especially with the metropolitan power.

Colonial administrations differed in various areas. However, in each case, the administering powers unwittingly created aspirations amongst indigenous populations for many of the values they themselves appreciated: independence in political life, industrialization of the economy and international prestige. Despite the great variety of cultural contexts in which relations between states occur today, some important characteristics of the state system represent an extension into new areas of the diplomatic, economic, ideological, and military traditions of the Europeans (Holsti, 1983:64).

One of the most important colonial legacies which affected the foreign policy of newly emerging states, have been these anti-colonial stances. Third World peoples struggled against colonial legacies in their economic, political and spiritual life. Thus, these peoples did not submit to the colonial fate. They fought back to regain their freedom and control of their land and labour (Saakana, 1987:10-11). However, the different experiences of colonialism affected the degree of the peoples' anti-colonial feelings. The calls for an increase in national unity and identity, to be achieved partly by specifically nationalist appeals, but partly also by anti-colonial stances, promoted a sense of national identity against the most easily perceived threats to that identity, which are the colonial powers. In pursuing this goal, governing elites use their minimal diplomatic experience and the resources created through their ability to combine domestic control with access to the international system, in order to develop the newly emerging states' foreign policy orientation (Clapham, 1977: 79-83).

After the decline of the colonial powers, some regions found that they had a common historical colonial legacy. This was most marked in Latin America, where nearly all the movements for national independence had the same colonial enemy to overthrow (Spain), whereas in Africa and Asia the new nationalistic movements struggled against various colonial powers: France, Britain, Holland, Spain, Portugal and Belgium (Kaufman, 1977:135). However, this common colonial experience, in addition to conflicts between hegemonic powers and an increasing superpower involvement in the Third World countries during the Cold War era, had an influence on the foreign policy making of the newly emerging states at that time, leading to the

emergence of the Non-Alignment Movement, a group of about 77 states that had and its own institutional forms and conferences (Clapham, 1977: 165-172).

It could be said that one remarkable legacy of colonialism has been the problem of political boundaries, which were drawn for purposes of colonial convenience and cut across ethnic, tribal, religious and linguistic ties, dismembered established political units, and joined more than one pre-colonial political entity into uneasy administrative unions (Ayoob, 1993:34). Moreover, Dessouki (1993:79) notes: "*In most of the Third World, the state is a recent phenomenon; its borders were decided by colonial powers and do not represent harmonious cultural or social formations*". In general, it can be said that colonisers shifted the terrain of engagement between them by occupying and carving out the colonised lands in between the powerful command of authority and the powerless silence of the victim (Prakash, 1995:9).

Thus, several conflicts in the Third World regions have been caused by the legacies of the colonial era, one example being the conflict that was started by the Vietminh in 1940 in order to force the reluctant French to grant independence to Vietnam, which escalated into a major American military intervention. Other prominent examples of conflicts which have their roots in the colonial era have been the Arab-Israeli conflict, some other African conflicts, such as between Ethiopia and Somalia and between Libya and Chad, the India and China border conflict, and the conflict over boundaries between Iran and Iraq. Moreover, the recent crisis in the Gulf over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait also had its roots in colonially arranged boundaries (Ayoob, 1993: 42-43).

The withdrawal of the colonial powers left a number of states whose legitimacy was based not on any geographic, ethnic or religious rationale, but on purely political criteria designed to serve the interests of the colonial powers. As result, those states have become preoccupied with boundary issues and, as such their foreign policies, particularly at the regional level, have been greatly influenced by these problems. This has been illustrated by the territorial disputes between Turkey and Syria, Qatar and Bahrain, and the African triangular conflict between Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania over the Western Sahara (Dawisha, 1977:52-53).

Hence, there is an obvious connection between the colonial legacy and the foreign policies of newly emerging states. Robert Good argues that the foreign policies of the countries that became independent in the years after the Second World War cannot properly be understood in isolation from the rigours of constructing autonomous legitimate polities within the territories demarcated by the former imperial powers (Lawson, 1993: 100). The achievement of independence did not eliminate the consequences of past colonial experience. As Kegley and Wittkopf (2001: 125) point out: *“Despite their legal status as independent entities, sovereignty could not erase the colonial heritage and vulnerabilities that the former colonies faced”*.

Thus, since the newly emerging states were dominated by the great imperial powers at the core of the international system, they viewed the inherited rules and structures as barriers to their true independence and growth, which strongly influenced their foreign policy towards the international community. Berreman in (Lundgren, 1992:87) states: *“Inequality between peoples and nations is a major threat to societal and even human survival”*.

### **2.2.7 National Security**

The duty of ensuring national security is incumbent on the government of the state. Before studying the link between national security and the foreign policy of newly emerging states, we need to define national security. Kegley and Wittkopf (2001:456) define national security as *“a country’s capacity to resist external or internal threats to its physical survival or core values”*. Moreover, Buzan (1991:116) states: *“National security is about the ability of states to maintain their independence identity and their functional integrity”*. However, other scholars see the national security as a concept used to encompass so many goals that there is no uniform agreement on what it encompasses and, hence, no universal understanding of the concept. Certainly it involves more than national survival. But what is involved is often left vague and indeterminate (Wolfers, 1952: 481-502).

The national security approach provides an overall interpretive framework for studying foreign policy because it forces historians to analyse the foreign as well as domestic factors shaping this policy. Historians believe that diplomatic behaviour responds mainly to the distribution of power in the international system; however, most revisionist and corporatist scholars assume that domestic economic forces and social structures are of overwhelming importance as well (Leffler, 1990: 143). However, greater attention has been given to the impact of national security upon foreign policy and international relations, as Wesson (1977:371) states: "*National security has remained the dominant consideration in the foreign policy*". Lyons (1963:497) added that "*Most importantly, there was no longer any doubt about the impact of national security problems on the state of international relations*".

Thus, a state's national security policy is that part of its foreign policy which is concerned with the allocation of resources for the production, deployment and employment of what we might call the coercive facilities which a nation uses in pursuing its interests. These coercive facilities are one among a number of foreign policy instrumentalities (Almond, 1956:371). In studying foreign policy, the national security approach demands that analysts distinguish between realities and perceptions. This task, as simple as it sounds, is fraught with difficulty because it is often hard for historians to agree on what constituted an actual danger than on what was a perceived threat (Leffler, 1990:144).

Threats to the national security of a state can take different forms. These include not only military threat but also economic, political or ideological threats, as well as appeals based on historical affiliations or ethnic factors. However, the important point here is that states define national security in different terms, depending upon the issues, circumstances, events and resources, which they consider more important (Wenner, 1993:169). Some scholars believe that national security is strengthened by economic power. Pfeifer (1993:127-141) states "*Self-sufficiency would make the country less vulnerable to the international pressure*". For example, food security could positively affect national security and lead to development and could, hence, reduce vulnerability.



However, states focussing on specific issues, such as the water resources problem between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, perceive national security threats and could, therefore, conduct an unstable foreign policy. Moreover, from the economic point of view, Buzan (1991: 99) pointed out that "*Weak states may find themselves trapped by historical patterns of economic development and political power which leave them underdeveloped and politically penetrated, and therefore unable to muster the economic and political resources necessary to build a strong state*". The relationship between Latin American states and the United States is often characterised in these terms (Ibid: 99).

Other scholars see the problem of debt as an indicator of how national security could be vulnerable to external threats. Chatelus (1993:145) argues that "*It has become manifestly impossible to re-establish the essential equilibrium, necessary for growth resumption, through sole use of structural adjustment policies. The proposed debt treatment, issued at the inception of the 'crisis' in 1982, has weighed heavily on the social stability and political security of numerous countries*". Moreover, he added that debtors must be provided with the time and the means for a microeconomic adjustment, which would prevent short-term social shocks and would guarantee, in the long run, the conditions of sustained growth (Ibid, 145). In doing so, the debt threat to the national security of less developed countries would be avoided.

Recognizing the impact of national security upon foreign policy, it must be acknowledged that the geographical position and the size of the newly emerging state are also essential to its national security. A state would find it difficult to maintain political independence when it is situated in a region that is politically and economically sensitive (Wenner, 1993:179-183). If a newly emerging state is also situated next to a large state (defined as having a population over 30 million), it would be more vulnerable to the intervention of its neighbours in its internal affairs, which could put its national security in danger. However, small and newly emerging states are more likely to use international organizations as arenas in order to accomplish their interests, and they are more apt to initiate joint foreign policy ventures. On the other hand, large states are more involved in different areas and

issues of international politics and see themselves as having a large number of constant tasks and functions abroad than small states (Holsti, 1983:340). This is particularly true, and it becomes more serious, if the newly emerging state has boundary problems with its neighbouring states, as in the case of Kuwait and Iraq.

The current practice of the international community is strongly opposed to the notion that the boundaries between states may be changed by force, as they are the dominant definition of state sovereignty. Heuser (1997:88) states "*The declarations of the United Nations reconstructed sovereignty to underline non-intervention and territorial integrity as the highest values*". However, problems relating to borders could assume other dimensions that may influence the state's national security. For example, migration, refugees and asylum seekers and the associated humanitarian interventions have an impact on national security and foreign policy (Brown, 2001:248). Also, the type of regime or leadership in a neighbouring state influences the national security of the newly emerging state. Strong nationalist leaders exhibit more conflictual behaviour in their foreign policies than do states with other types of leadership (Holsti, 1983:340). Hitler was a good example of this, when he invaded his neighbouring states during World War Two.

Moreover, public opinion about national security is an essential element of making the newly emerging state's foreign policy. The public opinion can be affected by the quality of the media (newspapers, magazines, TV channels, etc) which acquaint the people with foreign policy and national security issues. They take an active part in the structuring of issues, and participate in foreign policy making continually. The media, as Almond (1956:374) indicates, reaches the formal governmental agencies and the non-governmental opinion leaders and helps to create a kind of laboratory atmosphere in which foreign policy ideas can be tested out through the use of responsible speculation and imagination. The media, Almond adds, also constitutes a feedback mechanism on the consequences of policy decisions and furnishes the necessary basis for the constant process of modifying decisions which have already been made.

At present, the impact of national security on the foreign policy of newly emerging states has become more important, due to the growing conflicts between states. National security plays a key role in the making of any country's foreign policy and is an irreplaceable element in the establishment of international relations within the international community. However, as Toynbee maintained, peace could be achieved by converting people's thoughts from national competition to national cooperation (Thompson, 1956:387).

### **2.3 Specific Features of Foreign Policy-Making in Newly Emerging States: Lessons and Implications**

In accordance with what has been previously argued, it is clear that there are strong linkages between the national and international elements influencing the foreign policy of states (Rosenau, 1969:44-66). Hence, interdependence is becoming more prevalent in this era. It also clear that international relations and foreign policy decision-making is far from straightforward and is largely unpredictable. Tooze (1985:97) states: *"Foreign policy processes have adapted or have been forced to adapt to change, but many uneasy intragovernmental relationships have resulted from the blurring boundaries"*.

The foreign policy of states can also be implemented by a series of observable decisions and conscious choices as in some sort of game of political competition. But any study of a state's foreign policy over a given period quickly reveals that, rather than a series of clear decisions, there is a continuous and confusing 'flow of action', made up of a mixture of political decisions, non-political decisions, bureaucratic procedures and continuations of previous policies (Clarke, 1989:27). The reality of foreign policy-making and the desire to maintain an influential role in international relations are extremely complex.

The situation becomes more complicated for newly emerging states as they conduct their foreign policy and establish relations within the international community at the early stage of their statehood. A good example on this was the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during King Abdulaziz's reign, which emerged as a new state after a long period of internal struggle. One way of understanding complexity in this context is to look for the major problems that confront any newly emerging state during the establishment of its relations and the implementation of its foreign policy towards others. However, while some succeed in overcoming these problems, many policies fail. Most of the failures are due to the complication of implementation procedures; this would apply to both newly emerging and fully established states (Clarke and Smith, 1989: 179).

Many foreign policy analysts, cited in this chapter, have studied the problems of understanding and analysing foreign policy making. This chapter attempts to focus on the major problems that, in general, confront newly emerging states during the early formulation and implementation of their foreign policies. However, it is to be admitted that the seven factors which have been examined in the previous sections, as the major problems facing newly emerging states, do not in any way cover all the problems which such states face in the early period of their statehood. Moreover, it can be said that the study has revealed the essential lesson that each one of the seven factors may have positive or negative influence on the other factors, in addition to their combined influence on the foreign policy of newly emerging states towards the international community.

Newly emerging states have to comply with certain national and international behaviour criteria in order to achieve their social and political goals. The primary task of new states is to have a strong foreign policy. In order to achieve this, newly emerging states have to overcome certain problems, which differ from one state to another. The seven factors are not relevant to all states. There are some problems particular to some states but not others. An example of this was Jordan during its early emergence as a state, whereby, the problem of consolidating its national identity was its most important task. In contrast, the main problem of the foreign policy of

Kuwait during its emergence and even now, has primarily been national security. Furthermore, the foreign policy of some countries may be concerned with the problems of nation building and nationalism; a sense of being Cambodian may well be fostered by pursuing a foreign policy of strict independence, while the unity of Nigeria may be served by establishing the country's prominence inside the African bloc (Hill, 1977:5).

The foreign policy problems of newly emerging states vary in nature, magnitude and impact from state to state and from region to region as well. Some scholars emphasise that the various political traditions that have developed in different regions, when establishing a state's foreign policy, cannot be legislated away; they need to be considered in the making of effective policy, domestic as well as foreign (Wenner, 1993: 181). It is also true that the problems experienced by less developed states or regions are completely different from those in industrialised and powerful countries. Small states and less developed countries formulate and implement their foreign policy in ways that would avoid the threats posed by others, while the foreign policy of great powers are conducted in order to consolidate and increase their interests and strengthen their positions in the international arena. However, as Smith (1989: 191) says: "*A state with many international involvements will face distinctive foreign policy problems*".

Newly emerging states are more vulnerable to foreign policy problems. This may be because they lack credibility and legitimacy in the international community and are often distracted from international relations by their domestic instability, such as Somalia. Another distraction relates to the boundary issues, as in the case of Qatar and Bahrain, or economic ones, which dominated Yemen's relation with Saudi Arabia. However, small states with limited contacts in the international arena may have no fewer problems in foreign policy regarding their specific needs and resources than major power states with widely dispersed areas of concern entailing major commitments and demands (Smith, 1989: 191-192).

Each newly emerging state should find out what is the best strategy to adopt in order to cope with and successfully manage its foreign policy, especially with the influential powers in its region and neighbourhood. This is, of course, not to suggest that smaller states should simply imitate and follow their larger or more influential neighbour(s); indeed, they should not. It is to suggest that states be prepared to utilize effectively and quickly, for their benefit, whatever resources and openings they may be able to develop. There is certainly evidence in the modern world that smaller states, using flexible tactics and limited resources, have been able to carve substantial niches and an independent position for themselves (Wenner, 1993: 181).

What seems to be required, as a good strategy and a measure of quality in foreign policy, is an approach that combines a number of elements and thus enables the foreign policy of states to be assessed. As Waltz (1967: 16) has argued: *“What is wanted in foreign policy is not a set of simple attributes but instead a nice balance of qualities: realism and imagination, flexibility and firmness, vigour and moderation, continuity of policy when policy is good and the ability to change direction when new international conditions make new departures desirable, adaptability of policy without destruction of its coherence or dependability”*. This shows not only that the evaluation of foreign policies is necessary, but also that such evaluation has to be conducted in the light of the problems faced and the processes adopted by different states. A number of analysts have attempted this kind of analysis. Smith (1989: 205) quoted Hanrieder: *“For many governments, the fundamental standard of success in foreign policy is the extent to which the satisfaction of domestic and governmental needs can be combined with adaptation to external demands and the allocation of resources to competing activities”*. These guidelines are particularly important in the case of newly emerging states.

In this study, an attempt will be made to discuss the Saudi case in the light of the general problems that confront newly-emerging states during the course of formulating and implementing their foreign policy. Accordingly, the study will address the following research questions pertaining to the Saudi case:

1. To what extent did King Abdulaziz assume a personal role and leadership in the making and implementation of Saudi foreign policy over the period under study, and what was the role of institutions and advisors?
  
2. What was the impact of the task of integrating the Saudi national community on King Abdulaziz's attempt to adopt a cohesive foreign policy posture?
  
3. In what ways did the economic constraints and opportunities impact on the direction of Saudi foreign policy making during King Abdulaziz's reign?
  
4. In what ways did the territorial problems between Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring states affect Saudi regional and international foreign policy?
  
5. How did other regional (Arab and Middle-Eastern) issues influence the direction of Saudi foreign policy and to what extent did such issues attract King Abdulaziz's involvement?
  
6. How successful and effective was Saudi foreign policy under King Abdulaziz in achieving its desired or declared aims?

## **Chapter Three: The Genesis of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy Structure**

### **3.1 The Role of the Leader**

Mutual diplomatic representation between states is one of the features of sovereignty and international relations, practised by states since the eighteenth century, according to their needs and via suitable means to maintain their commercial, political and military interests. Diplomatic representation was practised with honour and high respect among states, through the exchanging of embassies and consulates, and became one of the important steps taken by any new state to demonstrate its sovereignty in the modern era (Holsti, 1983:162-163; Mahmasani, 1972:125).

The international relations of a state are influenced by many factors, such as its ideological orientation, its geographical position and its place in the international community. Thus, the international relations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that were established by King Abdulaziz with the international community were influenced by the religious position of the Arabian Peninsula, the King's charisma, and his wise religious leadership, which was characterised by clarity of objective, sticking to principles and supporting the truth (al-Salloom, 1995:239).

Al-Zirikli (1977a:381) stated that none of the parts of the Arabian Peninsula which were integrated by King Abdulaziz had a diplomatic representation, as it is known in modern times with other states, before the unification of the Kingdom into one political unit by him. Prior to unification there were merely a few consulates in al-Hijaz and a number of individuals scattered throughout the Arabian Peninsula who had no official diplomatic status, despite the titles that they possessed. Nevertheless, al-Hijaz was open to the international community and had relations with some states through their consulates there, especially those states which had Islamic populations.



This was seen by some writers as a form of diplomatic representation, practised by the Hijazi people before the conquest of al-Hijaz by Ibn Saud. Moreover, the conquest was seen as the main cause for the genesis of Saudi diplomatic relations, although Saudi Arabia was not officially recognized by other countries until their consulates in Jeddah strongly recommended, directly after the conquest of Jeddah in December 1925, that their states recognise Ibn Saud as King of Hijaz and as a powerful governor, who had influential authority and was able to ensure peace and justice in the area (al-Humoodi, 1998: 144-146; al-Salloom, 1995:241).

The charisma of Ibn Saud was an important factor in convincing others of his political and religious leadership. He would ask for counsel but at the same time never relied on others to play his role or allowed them to participate with him in his leadership. McLoughlin (1993:56) stated that, “ *When Philby comes to describing Ibn Saud himself he emphasises above all what most struck him as a man of action and vigour himself. Ibn Saud was a man of inexhaustible energy, a man who put the affairs of his state above all other considerations. We learn that Ibn Saud habitually at this stage of his life had four hours’ sleep a night and rested during the day, usually for two hours*”. In fact, maintaining the unity of leadership was one of the features of King Abdulaziz's rule, which was clearly evident at that time. This was due to the difficulties that he had faced in his childhood as a result of the dispute between his uncles, which led to the exile of Al Saud from Riyadh, and also to the many crises and conspiracies created by numerous enemies. Among these enemies were his own relatives, whom he encountered during the early years of regaining his ancestors' dominion and building his state (al-Mareq, 1978:196-197; Dickson, 2002: 300).

In view of this, and due to the lack or underdevelopment of state institutions at this time, King Abdulaziz was accustomed to dealing with all his state affairs himself and to issue his orders to his ministers and assistants directly. All his subordinates received their authority from him and acted according to his instructions. None of them could act before asking his permission first, and none of them was given authority of his own; Ibn Saud was the only authority in the Kingdom. It is true that his elder sons, especially Saud and Faisal, were appointed as his deputies in Najd and

al-Hijaz and that Prince Faisal, with his considerable experience of foreign affairs, was assigned as the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia. However, it should be understood that their function was always subject to the King's control in all matters (Philby, 1955: 297; Howarth, 1964:116; al-Zirikli, 1977:354).

This became more obvious in the decision-making process concerning foreign affairs. King Abdulaziz was the one who directly negotiated with foreign commissioners and held conferences with them. He also discussed treaties and authorised them himself, without using the formal circle of foreign affairs as was usual in other states (Wahbah, 1960:86-87 and 96). In addition, he was accustomed to holding meetings with his counsellors to discuss a variety of issues, asking them to give their advice and opinions with full freedom, while retaining his right to take the final decision, after which they would work to implement his instructions (al-Rasheed, 2002: 87). Niblock (1982:89) gives an indication of the King's approach: "*Abdulaziz's attitude toward advice offered to him is neatly summarised in a Koranic text which he frequently quoted to Philby: 'Take counsel among yourselves, and if they agree with you, well and good: but if otherwise, then put your trust in God and do that which you deem best'*".

There were many of successes in the accomplishment of King Abdulaziz's objective to maintain the interests of his country in external as well as internal affairs; these were due to King Abdulaziz's leadership and the carrying out of his responsibilities with full power. The total dedication and sincerity of his counsellors and assistants in implementing his instructions and accomplishing the goals set by him made the majority of the results very satisfactory (Philby, 1955 292-297; Wahbah, 2000:146).

### 3.2 King Abdulaziz's Counsellors

Al-Zirikli (1977a:1067) quoted Abdulrahman 'Azzam, the General Secretary of the Arab League, who said that *"one of King Abdulaziz's traits was his ability to deeply comprehend the problems that he encountered and produce appropriate solutions, after taking advice from his advisors; also one of his merits was his success in selecting his counsellors and assistants"*. 'Azzam added that, *"The King never issued orders regarding any problem without asking for the counsel of the people around him, who had much knowledge and experience"*. However, this does not mean that he felt bound to follow their advice; it should be understood that the decision always remained with him. Indeed when he considered something right and believed that his decision was correct, he would not hesitate to take it, even if it were against the opinion of his advisors (al-Mareq, 1978: 252-253).

At the beginning of the building of the state, most of Ibn Saud's followers, especially in Najd, were not skilled enough to help him in the administration of his state, particularly in the field of foreign affairs. Due to the lack of local expertise, it was necessary for Ibn Saud to open his state to all the Arabs and Muslims who wanted to work for him. Thus, many Arab experts who had already acquired administrative skills in their countries joined the service of Ibn Saud. Some of these had been driven from their countries by the pressure of the colonial powers and found themselves refugees in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the King gave all such non-Saudi Arabs the right to become Saudi nationals, or to stay and work according to their qualifications and professions. Moreover, he welcomed well-qualified Arabs, permitting them to work for him in the most important fields in his government, such as the diplomatic circle. This was impossible to see in the other countries, which can be added to King Abdulaziz merits (Philby, 1955:293-294; al-Mareq, 1978: 271-314; al-Khuwaiter, 1998: 138-139; al-Rasheed, 2002:87).

It is important here to state that King Abdulaziz at the beginning chose men who had stayed a long time in some places as counsellors and also as his representatives

abroad. Among them was Prince Ahmad al-Thunayyan, who came from Turkey to serve King Abdulaziz and represented him on many occasions. There was also Abdullah al-Dimluji, who came from Iraq and joined his service in 1915. He also drew upon advice from his representatives abroad: Abdullateef al-Mandeel in Iraq, Abdullah al-Niffisi in Kuwait, Abdulrahman al-Qusaibi in Bahrain, Abdullah al-Fawzan in Bombay, Fawzan al-Sabiq in Cairo and Abu Layla in Damascus. These men expended great efforts in serving the King and the country abroad, before the establishment of an official counsellors' circle (Almana, 1980: 190-191; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 98-99; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:299-300; al-Nafjan, 1992: 24).

In later years, more Arabs joined the service of King Abdulaziz; among them was Hafiz Wahbah from Egypt, who became Plenipotentiary Commissioner, and later, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to London. From Syria came Khalid al-Hakeem, Yusuf Yasseen, Khayr al-Deen al-Zirikli and Rashad Fir'un. From Lebanon came Fuad Hamzah, the first Secretary to Prince Faisal, when he was appointed as Foreign Minister. From Libya, there were Khalid al-Ghargani and Basheer al-Sa'dawi. From Iraq, there was Rasheed al-Kailani, who came to King Abdulaziz in 1945, after the suppression of his revolt against the British mandate in Iraq in 1941 (al-Mareq, 1978: 272-273; al-Hummoodi, 1998: 143-144; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:300). These individuals not only remained in King Abdulaziz's service, but generally continued to run the same departments, until the end of his reign, which certainly illustrated his ability to select the right men for the functions of state and also indicated that he trusted them with these important jobs and felt relaxed with their work and in their company (Philby, 1955: 294; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:300).

In 1932 the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was officially declared and King Abdulaziz established a small circle of counsellors to deal with daily matters of state. This circle was called the Political Committee (al-Shu'bah al-Siyasiyyah). The Political Committee was mainly attended by King Abdulaziz's brother Prince Abdullah, his two elder sons Saud and Faisal, Hafiz Wahbah, Khalid al-Hakeem, Yusuf Yasseen,

Fuad Hamzah, Khalid al-Ghargani and John Philby.<sup>1</sup> However, Philby rarely attended the Committee as he preferred to meet the King during his relaxed evening meeting (Almana, 1980:191-192; al-Rasheed, 2002:87).

Although various opinions have been proposed regarding the relationship of St John Philby with the King, it should be remembered that he was one of the King's foreign advisers for more than 30 years and he was greatly impressed by the charisma of Ibn Saud and by his attitude, which finally convinced him to convert to Islam. According to some writers, Philby was seen as very loyal to Ibn Saud and to the Arab cause, which sometimes led him to work against the misguided policy of Britain toward the Arabs; he eventually resigned from his official position with the British Government as a protest against that policy, as he himself acknowledged (Graves, 1950: 225-226; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:143; al-Nafjan, 1992: 25; al-Majid, 2003: 59). However, King Abdulaziz described Philby as no more than a merchant and a commissioner<sup>2</sup> (Wahbah, 2000: 283; al- Zirikli, 1977:1358). Moreover, Howarth (1964:116) stated that, "*Philby might also be said to have been an adviser, in so far as he was always ready with advice; but it was several years after the fall of Hail when he first joined his fortunes to Ibn Saud's, and at his own wish he never held any paid or official position in the court.*"

King Abdulaziz was accustomed to holding an official meeting of the Political Committee every day after midday prayer and the only function of the Committee was to advise him. The King would raise a subject as he wished and ask for advice; a discussion then started, in which all the members of the meeting were quite free to give their opinions and make any suggestions. The King would end the discussions when he felt that he had heard enough and would then make his own decision about

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<sup>1</sup> His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah insisted that Philby was not allowed to attend the meetings of this Committee. This information was given during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

what to do. None of the members was allowed to take the initiative and suggest a topic to be discussed; this right was entirely belonged to the King (Almana, 1980:179).

### **3.3 The Foreign Ministry and the Other Governmental Structures**

#### **3.3.1 The Establishment of the Saudi Foreign Ministry**

The foreign ministry of any country is the institution which the government relies on to plan, guide and administer its foreign policy. It organises the government's relationship with other countries and international organizations. It is like most other government institutions, in the sense that it bears responsibility for what it is charged with and implements its governmental policies with any other foreign party. This is why ministries and organizations in any country may not have any direct relationship or communication with other foreign parties except under the supervision and with the advice of their foreign ministry. In other words, the foreign ministry in any country is the backbone of the formation of its foreign policy ('Amer, 1976: 266; al-Salloom, 1995: 241).

After the complete unification of al-Hijaz in 1926 and the recognition by several foreign countries of Ibn Saud as the King of al-Hijaz, there was a fundamental change in his policy in dealing with foreign countries. Thus he developed relationships with countries other than Britain. He also increased his cooperation and work with the countries and peoples of the Islamic world as a result of his control over the Muslim Holy Places and his responsibility for the Hajj affairs. This was in addition to his involvement in dealing and negotiating with his neighbours regarding border problems created by the new situation. In these circumstances, it became essential to find an official institution under the King's authority to deal with these problems and put forward solutions and plans, and which would facilitate his organising the

international relationships between his country and other countries, based on international laws and the principle of mutual exchange of relations and interests. The King therefore decided to create the Department of Foreign Affairs (Mudiriyyat al-Shu'un al-Kharijiyyah) in 1926 (al-Humoodi, 1998: 144-149; Abu 'Ulayyah, 1986: 99-100).

The Department of Foreign Affairs was created in accordance a Royal Decree on 30 August 1926 in Makkah. Article 17 of this order emphasised that the duty of the Department of Foreign Affairs was to execute the government foreign policy within its core policy. The article also provided that the four branches of this Department were to include the Political, Administrative, Legal, and Consular sections. Abdullah al-Dimluji, who came from Iraq and joined King Abdulaziz's service from 1915, remaining in the service of the Kingdom for more than 25 years in numerous places, was appointed Director of Foreign Affairs. However, Article 18 of the Royal Decree stated that the Department of Foreign Affairs was linked directly to the King, apart from its administrative and consular branches, which were attributed to his viceroy in al-Hijaz, his son Prince Faisal ('Amer, 1976:254-255; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 100-101; Shakir, 1948: 67; Sadiq, 1965: 71).

Although the Department of Foreign Affairs remained as such for four years, before it became the Foreign Ministry, it did not establish any embassies for the Kingdom abroad, but it did install two Legations. The first, established in Egypt in 1926, was led by Fawzan al-Sabiq, even though the Egyptian Government did not recognize him as more than a representative of Ibn Saud in Cairo. The second, set up in London in 1930, was led by Hafiz Wahbah as Plenipotentiary Commissioner. Despite this lack of representation, the Department of Foreign Affairs succeeded in making a number of treaties and frontier settlements, as well as trade and friendship agreements. These included one with the French Government in March 1926, the Jeddah Agreement with Britain in 1927, an agreement with the German Government in April 1929, one with the Turkish Government in August 1929, and another with the Iranian Government in August of the same year (al-Qaba', 1968: 483-495; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 101-102).

On 18 December 1930, a Royal Decree was issued ordering the change of the Department of Foreign Affairs to a Foreign Ministry. Prince Faisal, in addition to his initial role as Viceroy in al-Hijaz, was appointed Foreign Minister and Fuad Hamzah was appointed as Deputy in the Ministry. The location of the Foreign Ministry was in Makkah until 1947, when it was moved to Jeddah, which was the location of all foreign consulates and legations. Prince Faisal remained the Foreign Minister for the whole period of his father's reign. Although the Prince was regarded as the architect and the director of Saudi Foreign policy, he always worked under the direct supervision of the King. Thus, it was not possible for the Foreign Minister to take a decision in any matter regarding foreign policy, as the final decision was made by King Abdulaziz. The authority of the Ministry remained narrow and was concerned with the consulates and administration only (al-Zirikli, 1977: 368-369; Abu 'Ulayyah, 1986: 104; 'Amer, 1976: 266-267).

The Foreign Ministry was the first ministry established by King Abdulaziz. It was also one of the most important steps towards the establishment of government institutions on a modern foundation. Its organizational structure was simple at the time of its establishment and, in accordance with the economic capability of the country at that time, it comprised only five departments: the Private Office, and the Oriental, Administrative, Political and Consular departments. In spite of the modest start of the Ministry, it continued to develop and expand with time (al-Sumari et al., 1999: 102-105; al-Humoodi, 1998: 166-167).

In 1933 a proposal for the development of its structure and plans was forwarded by Yusuf Yasseen to the King for consideration, and the King agreed to keep developing the Ministry to a level which suited the position which Saudi Arabia had achieved among the nations and its relations with other countries. It established more departments, such as the Protocol (*al-Marasim al-Malakiyyah*) and financial branches. In fact, the Foreign Ministry succeeded, during King Abdulaziz's reign, in implementing Saudi foreign policy in accordance with his advice and supervision, from its establishment until his death in 1953. In spite of the Ministry's early difficulties and with a limited number of Ministry employees, who did not exceed



twenty even in 1947, Saudi diplomatic activities increased in terms of both sending and receiving diplomatic representations (al-Sumari et al., 1999: 106-112).

The first diplomatic delegations to the Saudi Government consisted of only a few countries, which had a diplomatic presence in al-Hijaz at the time of its unification by Abdulaziz in 1926 and which recognized King Abdulaziz and his Government; these were the Soviet Union, Britain, Holland, France and Turkey. During the period 1926-1929, the number of diplomatic delegations increased to nine: the new states were Switzerland in 1927, Germany in 1928, Iran in 1929 and Poland in 1929. The number increased after the establishment of the Foreign Ministry in 1930 and grew to 29 by the end of 1951.<sup>1</sup> The number of Saudi diplomatic delegations with the other world governments had also increased before King Abdulaziz's death in 1953 to twelve embassies, eight legations and six consulates. The Saudi Foreign Ministry deepened its political and economic cooperation with other countries at all levels (al-Zirikli, 1977: 383-384; al-Humoodi, 1998: 144-150; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 129-178).

Among the most important political achievements of Saudi diplomacy during King Abdulaziz's reign was the establishment of the Arab League; Saudi Arabia was one of the countries that took the lead in its establishment. Al-Humoodi (1998:531) claimed that the idea of the creation of an organization which would look after Arab affairs and unite the Arab peoples had been in King Abdulaziz's mind for more than thirty years before the establishment of the Arab League. Before the First World War began he demanded that Turkey invite the Arab leaders to a conference in a country not under its occupation to ascertain whether they shared an ambition to achieve a single Arab political unit or to form several political units linked to each other and which would cooperate for their common interests and general welfare (al-Zirikli, 1977: 1199). Turkey refused and so, after the start of the War, he sent an invitation to the major leaders of the Arabian Peninsula, such as Sharif Husain, Ibn Rasheed and

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<sup>1</sup> Among the delegations were those of the United States of America in 1931, Iraq in 1931, Yemen in 1933, Italy in 1932, Afghanistan in 1932, Jordan in 1933, Ethiopia in 1934, Egypt in 1936, Syria in 1941, Lebanon in 1944, Chile in 1945, Argentina in 1946, India in 1947, Pakistan in 1947, Indonesia 1948, Spain in 1948 and Palestine in 1948.

Mubarak al-Sabah, to exchange views on what they should do in order to avoid the destruction and the calamity of this War (ibid). It is undeniable, therefore, that the idea was originally his and that the active work to create it was also his chosen task, albeit with the participation and support of the other Arab leaders (al-Zirikli, 1977: 1199; al-Humoodi, 1998:531; Van, der Meulen, 1999: 121).

There were, however, doubts and fears in King Abdulaziz's mind, regarding some of the calls for Arab unity. Among those calling for unity was the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, who proposed it in 1941 and 1943. There were also other individual suggestions for sub-regional integrations. The most important of these projects was the regional integration in Bilad al-Shaam, known as Greater Syria, and also the plan for an integration between Iraq and Bilad al-Shaam, known as the Fertile Crescent, proposed by Nouri al-Sa'ed, the former Iraqi Prime Minister. King Abdulaziz saw that these projects and suggestions would benefit the Hashemite House in Iraq and Jordan. He also feared that those kinds of narrower integration plans might only benefit individuals and personal interests and purposes rather than the Arab people as a whole. Were these plans to succeed, they might have constituted a real threat to his unified territories and the sovereignty of his country. This prospect increased King Abdulaziz's doubts concerning these proposals for regional integration (al-Zirikli, 1977:1200-1207; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 190-193).

King Abdulaziz wished, through his Arab foreign policy, to achieve all kinds of political, economic and cultural cooperation with the Arabs. When the notion of Arab unity or the Arab League became clear, he included his recommendations in a message and sent it on 3 January 1945 to the General Arab Conference, which was taking place in Alexandria in Egypt. He had in mind an Arab organization that would foster coordination and cooperation among its members, based on full respect for the sovereignty of all its members. This indeed came about, since the King's view was supported and shared by the Egyptian Government, as was made clear during King Farooq's visit to Saudi Arabia on 25 January 1945, to dispel Saudi reservations. The two Saudi representatives in Cairo, Yusuf Yasseen and al-Zirikli, signed the Arab

League Charter on 22 March 1945 ('Assah, 1971:128-131; al-Zirikli, 1977:1207-1209; al Humoodi, 1998: 528-529; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 193-197).

In 1945 the Saudi Foreign Ministry accomplished a great mission under the direction of King Abdulaziz due to two successful meetings which were held in that year. The first meeting was between King Abdulaziz and Franklin Roosevelt, President of the United States, on 14 February at the Bitter Lakes, and the second was with Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, on 17 February in the Fayyoun Oasis, 50 miles south of Cairo.<sup>1</sup> This diplomatic activity at the highest level stemmed from the King's strong desire to join the United Nations, which was established at the end of World War Two. Encouraged by his meeting with Roosevelt, King Abdulaziz instructed his Foreign Ministry to send an official letter on 1 March 1945 to the United States, asking it to support the Saudi request to become a member state of the United Nations. The Saudi request was accepted and he was informed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had become the 45<sup>th</sup> member of the United Nations (al-Zirikli, 1977: 1155-1212; Leatherdale, 1983: 167-183; al-Sumari et al., 1999:187).

However, there were two obstacles. The first was that Saudi Arabia should declare war against the Axis nations; Saudi Arabia agreed and declared war against Japan and Germany on 1 March 1945.<sup>2</sup> The second was the Soviet objection to Saudi Arabia attending the first meeting of the United Nations, which was overcome by the British Secretary of State, Antony Eden, who convinced the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, of the importance of calling Saudi Arabia to attend (al-Sumari et al., 1999:187-188). As a result, Saudi Arabia received an official invitation from the US, the UK, the Soviet Union and China to attend the first conference in San Francisco. The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal, led the Saudi delegation which signed the Charter of the United Nations on 25 April 1945. In his country's official address to the conference, Prince Faisal made it clear that the principles which

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office (Now British National Archive), FO 371/45542, despatch from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 27 February 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations were the same principles that Islamic Law calls for and that they had already been adopted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Government ratified the Charter of the United Nations on 2 October 1945 (al-Zirikli, 1977: 1212; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 188; al-Humoodi, 1998: 706-707).

This great diplomatic success was achieved by the Saudi Foreign Ministry despite the limited resources and capabilities, and a lack of extensive experience. It should be reiterated, however, that the Ministry always referred to King Abdulaziz, in order to take instructions from him directly, and implemented his policy, as he instructed, even on minor issues. Al-Zirikli (1977a:369) explains: *“The Foreign Ministry of King Abdulaziz was not able to take any action in foreign affairs, nor could they bind or loosen any tie without referring to him and taking his instruction, either face to face, or by telephone, telegram or mail.”*

### **3.3.2 Other Governmental Institutions**

As a result of the conquest of al-Hijaz, and concerned to apply the Principle of Counsel (al-Shura), King Abd al- Aziz established the Domestic Council (al-Majlis al-Ahli) on 19 December 1924, to help him deal with the affairs of al-Hijaz. This was the nucleus of the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura) which was established on 13 January 1926. This was concurrent with assigning King Abdulaziz's second son, Prince Faisal, as Viceroy in the region of al-Hijaz and as Chairman of the Consultative Council. The Council went through several stages of development in a short period, until it took final shape on 12 May 1932. One of the most important tasks for the Council was enacting laws and regulations, in addition to monitoring and controlling the actions taken by governmental institutions in accomplishing their missions. The Council's instructions stated that its task was consultation, legislation and supervision. The Consultative Council thus acted as a legislative body regulating the activities of the governmental institutions in a way similar to other modern

constitutions (al-Zirikli, 1977: 571-573; Vassiliev, 1998: 295-296; al-Salloom, 1995: 102-108; Al-'Uthaimen, 1999: 302-304).

The period 1931-1932 witnessed the emergence of a central administrative system in Saudi Arabia. Its mission was to concentrate on internal affairs and its legislative role. On 29 December 1931 a Royal Decree was issued establishing the Council of Directors (Majlis al-Wukala), which was similar to a council of ministers; it played this role for about 23 years. Prince Faisal was appointed as Chairman in addition to his other positions (Vassiliev, 1998:297; al-Salloom, 1995:109-110). As we have noted, the year 1932 witnessed the cessation of internal disturbances and the total unification of the country. It became essential to unify the country and the people's identity under one name which would be officially recognized when dealing with other countries as a government and also at the level of internal affairs. Accordingly, a Royal Decree was issued on 18 September 1932, officially unifying the Kingdom under the name of the "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and it proclaimed Abdulaziz as "King of Saudi Arabia" (al-Zirikli, 1977: 651; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:308; al-'Alami, 1999:3).

Also, in 1931-1932 more ministries were established, in addition to the Foreign Ministry, including the Ministry of the Interior, which was established on 29 December 1931 and also assigned to Prince Faisal. On 14 August 1932, the Agency of Finance was upgraded to a Ministry of Finance and Abdullah al-Sulaiman was appointed as its head. It is relevant here to emphasize that many of the governmental departments and facilities were under the control of the Ministry of Finance, such as those dealing with defence, pilgrimage, agriculture, communications, transportation and mining. More ministries and governmental institutions were established later, including the Ministry of Defence in March 1946, which was headed by Prince Munsoor. Again, each minister received his authorisation directly from King Abdulaziz and had to go to him personally regarding all affairs; no one was authorized to represent him, not even the Head of the Council of Directors (al-Zirikli, 1977: 359-379; Hamzah, 1968:117-118; Vassiliev, 1998:297; al-Salloom, 1995:110-155).

The Consultative Council as a legislative institution and the Council of Directors as an administrative and executive institution, together with the other ministries and departments, were able to accomplish many of their tasks due to the support of Prince Faisal himself, who was notable for his personality, extensive experience, knowledge and devotion to his father and his country. Because he was the Viceroy in al-Hijaz and the Chairman of both the Consultative Council and Council of Directors, and at the same time directing the Ministries of Foreign and Interior Affairs, and because most of these institutions were established in al-Hijaz, Prince Faisal was able to supervise their activities directly. This concentration of administrative authority ensured great coordination and cooperation and resulted in many successes. Nevertheless, these two councils had limited authority, especially in foreign affairs. They played influential roles in the activities of the Saudi Government for more than 23 years until the establishment of the Council of Ministers in 1953 (al-Zirikli, 1977:571-580; Niblock, 1982:89; al-Salloom, 1995:107-110).

On 9 October 1953 a Royal Decree announced the establishment of the Council of Ministers. Prince Saud was appointed as Crown Prince and the Head of the Council of Ministers, with Prince Faisal as his deputy and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In that year the real Government of Saudi Arabia was born. The Council of Ministers did not convene during King Abdulaziz's reign due to his illness and eventual death on 11 November 1953. As a result of the King's death, Prince Saud succeeded him as King of Saudi Arabia, and Prince Faisal as a Crown Prince and also Head of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister (Wahbah, 2000: 145). Because of the death of King Abdulaziz before the convening of the Council of Ministers, it is not possible to assess the Council's influence over government policy and the decision-making process, particularly in foreign affair.

### 3.4 Influence of the Royal, Religious and Tribal Establishments

#### 3.4.1 The Royal Establishment

According to many writers, among them al-Saud (N.D:153) and al-Tuwaijri (1997:8), ten princes participated in the conquest of Riyadh in 1902. It is clear that some of Ibn Saud's brothers and cousins had been his companions from the earliest days of his long gruelling journey to establish his new state. It is well known that they afforded him great support and advice. As a reward to them and in order to take advantage of their ability in administration as trustworthy people, he appointed some of them as governors to the most important and sensitive provinces. Prince Abdullah Ibn Jelawi was sent first to al-Qaseem and later to al-Hasa; he was described as the second most important member of the Royal Family after Abdulaziz himself at that time.<sup>1</sup> Also, Prince Abdulaziz Ibn Musa'ad was first appointed in al-Qaseem and later in Hail, and Prince Saud al-Kabeer in al-Qaseem (Williams, 1933:68; al-Zamil, 1972: 466-473; Kostiner, 1993:73). These appointments related to internal affairs. Regarding foreign affairs, however, the situation was completely different.

In the area of foreign policy making, none of the Royal Family members was involved directly nor was he given authority. The King's brother, Prince Abdullah, was well known for his wisdom and wide knowledge. He was one of the princes closest to the King, and was one of the prominent members of the Political Committee (al-Shu'bah al-Siyasiyyah). He was also one of the princes whom King Abdulaziz trusted and who, most of the time, offered highly valued advice. Prince Abdullah was considered to be the King's permanent and closest counsellor until the end of King Abdulaziz's life (al- Zirikli, 1977b: 323; Almana, 1980:192; McLoughlin, 1993:38).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/3737, report by Major More, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, dated 13 December 1927.

Another prince helpful to Ibn Saud in foreign affairs, especially in the early years of King's reign, was Prince Ahmad al-Thunayyan, who descended from a collateral branch of Al Saud (Thunayyan was the brother of Mohammad Ibn Saud, the founder of the first Saudi state). Ahmad al-Thunayyan was a knowledgeable person. He had lived and studied in Istanbul, due to the capture of his family and its transfer to Turkey after the Ottoman invasion of the Arabian Peninsula in the nineteenth century. He was well educated, had a great knowledge of Europe and spoke several languages. He joined the service of King Abdulaziz in the early years and became Ibn Saud's confidant, advisor and foreign affairs executive. He was a close companion of Ibn Saud and on many occasions represented him in external affairs (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 365-366; Kostiner, 1993:73; McLoughlin, 1993: 56; Vassiliev, 1998: 438).

The last mission assigned to Prince Ahmad al-Thunayyan was when he represented Ibn Saud at the Conference of al-Muhammarah in May 1922, called to discuss the conflicts over the Saudi-Iraqi border. During the conference, Ahmad al-Thunayyan took it upon himself to sign the Treaty of al-Muhammarah, which was rejected by King Abdulaziz. This was because his representative had not followed the instructions given to him and had acted beyond his authority. Consequently, Ahmad al-Thunayyan resigned from the service (Troeller, 1976:178; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 366). The refusal of Ibn Saud to ratify the treaty of al-Muhammarah showed beyond doubt that there was only one foreign policy maker in his state and that person was Ibn Saud; all the people around him were no more than advisers. Despite his resignation, Ibn Thunayyan, until his death in Riyadh in 1923, remained very close to Ibn Saud (al-Zirikli, 1977b: 323; al-Rayhani, 1988:207).

Among Ibn Saud's sons, there were Prince Saud and Prince Faisal who both helped him a great deal, as his viceroys in Najd and al-Hijaz, respectively, in managing the affairs of the state. With regard to foreign policy making and international affairs, Prince Faisal was most useful to his father due to his considerable experience in this field and early contacts with the governments of many Western countries. Still, in foreign policy making, even the Princes were no more than advisers and none of them was given independent authority. It was understood that their roles would be subject



to the King's own control, especially in matters of importance. Ibn Saud himself was the only real authority in his state (Philby, 1955: 279; Howarth, 1964: 116; Almana, 1980:179).

Philby (1955: 279) claimed that Ibn Saud, in the early stages of his reign, deliberately refrained from giving his sons or any other members of the Royal Family any influential position.<sup>1</sup> This was probably wise, in order not to risk their exposure to criticism or censure.<sup>2</sup> In general, the extensive Royal Family constituted one of the most important political entities during King Abdulaziz's reign. In the beginning, most of them aided him in the gradual establishment of his realm, but some of them, such as the branch of Al Saud Ibn Faisal, headed by Prince Saud al-Kabeer, with a few of his cousins, revolted in the early 1910s, claiming seniority over King Abdulaziz's branch. Some tribes supported their revolt, and so allied themselves with the al-Hazzani family, who backed the rebels in the hope of regaining control of al-Hariq (Niblock, 1982:84; al-Rayhani, 1988:178-196).

### **3.4.2 The Role of Religious Leadership ('Ulama)**

In Saudi Arabia, an alliance between the political authority ('Umara) and the religious power ('Ulama) was sealed in 1744 due to the great alliance between Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab and Mohammad Ibn Saud, the founder of the first Saudi state. The 'Umara' were in charge of maintaining security and internal order, and the 'Ulama were responsible for teaching, upholding the values of Islamic morality and interpreting the Islamic law (Shari'ah). As a result of this cooperation, these two pillars secured and consolidated a greater degree of legitimacy for the Saudi state because of the influence they each exerted over their followers in the Arabian Peninsula. After more than two hundred years of mutual support, these two powers had created a flexible mechanism, which, however, was not exclusive to the Saudi

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

people. Legal opinion on the Islamic sources of law (fatwa) would reinforce this relationship, through interpreting and applying the law, and, as a result, promoting the welfare of the Islamic state (al-Rayhani, 1988:40-43; Kechichian, 1986: 53; Kostiner, 1993:73; Ibn Ghannam, 1994:86-90; Philby, 1997:9-14).

The existence of the 'Ulama and their influence in Najd had their origins among the majority of the people of Najd. They emerged in the context of an already religious society, which had followed the instructions and principles of Islam according to the precepts of al-Madhab al-Hanbali (the creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal) for about five centuries. The reformer Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab renewed these instructions at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Before the time of King Abdulaziz, every town and village in Najd had its mosque and also its religious scholar, and perhaps several, who practised and taught the principles of Islamic ritual. Their students became Imams of the mosque (leaders of prayer), and those who had extensive knowledge of Islam acted as judges to implement the Islamic laws (Shari'ah) under the supervision and patronage of local governors (al-'Uthaimen, 1978:32-40; al-Rasheed, 2002: 50-51).

From the beginning, Ibn Saud acknowledged that the 'Ulama would have a strong influence in consolidating the legitimacy of his leadership. The 'Ulama, and most of the people in Najd, recognized the need for a solid alliance between the religious, political and military leaderships. Ibn Saud, as a descendant of the Al Saud family, who had continuously supported Islam since the famous alliance of 1744, was perceived as the best person for this mission, especially after he conquered Riyadh in 1902. Thousands of people in Najd welcomed the return of Ibn Saud and swore an oath of allegiance (bay'ah) to him, calling him their Imam (leader). The title of Imam gave him the same religious and political position which had been given to his ancestors. At the same time, the 'Ulama emphasised the importance of solidarity with the political and military leadership (Lacey, 1981:52; al-'Uthaimen, 1999: 54; al-Rasheed, 2002: 50).

The 'Ulama were very loyal to Ibn Saud as their Imam, and supported him on many occasions, such as their declaration of a fatwa (legal opinion) approving the invasion of al-Hijaz in June 1924, when Ibn Saud and his followers (Ikhwan) asked for their opinion on whether it was permissible to go on Hajj, using force if necessary. He needed to legitimise his proposed action and obtain the full support of all his people (Armstrong, 1934:217; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 169-170; al-Rayhani, 1988:326-327; Habib, 1998:188). Moreover, the 'Ulama supported him in the great assembly, held in Riyadh in 1928, as a result of the Ikhwan rebellion, when the 'Ulama confirmed that they had never noticed any weakness or indifference in Ibn Saud's support for Islam. They also swore to God that they had never seen him commit any deed contrary to the Islamic rules. Indeed, they strongly supported him against the leaders of the rebellion (Armstrong, 1934:274; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 479-484; al-Zamil, 1972: 255; Helms, 1981:255). Al-Rasheed (2002: 67-69) pointed out that this was a critical moment in the relationship between Ibn Saud and the 'Ulama, but, having secured the 'Ulama's full approval, Ibn Saud had the freedom to act against the rebellious Ikhwan, and he crushed their movement and pacified their influence.

King Abdulaziz generally showed great respect for the 'Ulama. On many occasions, he asked them to provide him with fatwas and advice on the general affairs of the state. His respect for them was grounded in his faith and his belief that they represented the intact Islam. The King admitted that he used to sweat from veneration whenever he met Shaikh Abdullah Ibn Abdullateef<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 741; al-Rasheed, 2002: 62). Ibn Saud's veneration of the 'Ulama gave them considerable power. They could, without fear, tell Ibn Saud if they found that he was about to do something that went against Islamic rules, such as when they successfully persuaded him not to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his accession to the Saudi throne. Ibn Saud followed them when he felt that they were in the right. However, he sometimes ignored their opinion when he felt that they did not understand the situation or were involved in issues which were none of their businesses, especially those related to his

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

foreign affairs<sup>1</sup> (Lewis, 1933: 521; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 742-744; Vassiliev, 1998: 290; Wahbah, 2000: 280-282).

King Abdulaziz was very unyielding with everyone, even the 'Ulama, when the matter was related to his foreign affairs or some issue that would threaten the unity of his newly emerging state, such as their attempt to force the Shi'ah to adopt Sunni beliefs.<sup>2</sup> They sent him a long letter setting out their arguments; he revised the letter and told the 'Ulama that they should stick to religion and leave politics to him (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 744-745). In 1927, the 'Ulama of Najd protested against the new programme of updating the curriculum of the general education system in Saudi Arabia by including subjects such as foreign languages, technical drawing and geography. He asked them, in the course of long discussions, to show him the relevant Islamic proofs which would indicate that such things were forbidden. They finally answered his representative (Hafiz Wahbah) that they would refer their opinion to the Imam (King Abdulaziz), and that it would be appreciated if the Imam accepted and followed their opinion. They added that if the Imam disagreed, it would not be the first time that he had acted against their opinions. King Abdulaziz decided to ignore their opinion because it was not supported by accurate religious proofs (Vassiliev, 1998: 292; Wahbah, 1964:49-51).

In 1931, the 'Ulama met Ibn Saud to inform him of their opinion regarding his plan to erect more telegraphic stations in the major cities in Najd; they had agreed to reject this plan. They said that his advisors had deceived him, referring especially to Philby, who, they said, was behind such things, and who was working to submit their country to the British. Decidedly, "*No one has deceived me,*" the King answered, adding that "*Philby is just a merchant who worked as the commissioner in this deal*". King Abdulaziz also said to them: "*Remember this above everything. Our country is too dear for us to hand it over to anyone except at the price we paid for it, our own blood. My dear brothers, I place you on my head as a crown* (an indication of great respect),

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*and I appeal to you to hold together and stay in place as my pride and ornament. For I fear that if I am forced to shake my head, one or more of you may fall to the ground, and believe me, he who falls will not be able to regain his place so easily. There are two matters which I will not discuss, because I am convinced of their great importance to me and to my country, and that they are permissible according to Islam. They are wireless telegraphy and motor cars”* (Wahbah, 1964:59; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 745).

Ibn Saud dealt with the ‘Ulama with wisdom and patience. Indeed, he successfully maintained a good relationship with them and they were unswervingly loyal to his leadership. He followed their instructions and advice as long as they did not delay his plans to develop and modernise his emerging state or intervene in his foreign policy and the international affairs of his state.

### **3.4.3 The Tribal Factor (the Ikhwan)**

In the conception of the people of Najd, the expression "Ikhwan" (brethren) referred to the relationship between the tribesmen who abandoned their old style of life and settled in small towns to practise the real Islam, dealing with others according to their religious instructions and regarding this brotherhood as one that took priority over kinship. They took to heart the real meaning of the Koranic verse<sup>1</sup> *“And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the Pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: that ye may be guided”* (Helms, 1981:130; al-Salloom, 1995:320-321; al-Tuwaijri, 1997: 200; Habib, 1998:48-49).

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<sup>1</sup> Surat 'Al 'Imran (The Household of 'Imran), Verse, 103. Yusuf Ali's Translation: <http://quran.al-islam.com/Targama/DispTargam.asp?nType=1&nSora=3&nAya=103&nSeg=1&l=arb&t=eng>.

During the period between about 1912 and the late 1920s, the Ikhwan played an influential role in the wars and political events in the Arabian Peninsula. The Ikhwan were courageous fighters in the battlefield, full of religious zeal, and they devoted their life to spreading their belief and expanding their state. They were always ready to fight and implement their Imam's orders. King Abdulaziz admitted that, while he met all the Ikhwan's needs when they came to him in peace time, when war came they did not ask him for anything, but supported him with their own supplies and weapons. The Ikhwan were the major political and military instrument which helped the King to fortify and expand his authority over most of the Arabian Peninsula. They were his strong and loyal soldiers in the conquest of Asir, Hail and the Northern Provinces, al-Hijaz and Jaizan. They were also his key political card, enabling him to consolidate his sovereignty during his negotiations with the neighbouring powers (Helms, 1981:225-226; Kostiner, 1985:298-299; al-Rayhani, 1988:264-335; McLoughlin, 1993: 40-71).

It can be said that until 1918, the relationship between Ibn Saud and the Ikhwan was very good. However, some of their leaders were beginning to feel that they should be more influential and important, and so they began to argue with Ibn Saud, telling him where to expand and whom they should attack. For example, they asked Ibn Saud to attack al-Hijaz instead of Hail during the Conference of Shaqra' in 1918. This interference in political affairs became more obvious after the Ikhwan's decisive victory in the battle of Turabah in 1919. Moreover, some of the Ikhwan started to become more fanatical in their attitude towards those who did not abandon their nomadic life,<sup>1</sup> and towards the urban dwellers in al-Hasa,<sup>2</sup> such as the Shi'ah and non-Ikhwan Sunni populations. The extremist Ikhwan became aggressive towards anybody who did not adopt their particular beliefs or even dressed differently. In their conception, many things were forbidden. For instance, long moustaches were "Kabeerah" (big sin), wearing an 'Iqal (a black strip worn to secure a head covering) instead of a white turban was "Kufr" (unbelief). Thus, the fanatics among the Ikhwan

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; and by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

struck terror into the hearts of those Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula whom they regarded as infidels since they did not follow the Ikhwan's doctrine (Wahbah, 1964:125-130; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 143-150; Almana, 1980:81-82; al-Rayhani, 1988:265; Habib, 1998:143-145).

The fanaticism of some Ikhwan led the people to implore King Abdulaziz to stop the interference of the fanatics in their life and territories.<sup>1</sup> The 'Ulama were also in dispute with the Ikhwan extremists and the half-educated teachers who lacked an adequate knowledge and understanding of the real Islam and poisoned the minds of naive people in order to propagate their terror. To solve the problem, Ibn Saud called for a conference in Riyadh in 1919 between the 'Ulama and the Ikhwan leaders in order to discuss the differences between the two parties. At the end of the conference, a fatwa was announced and signed by most of the 'Ulama of Najd. This fatwa included major recommendations clarifying that most of the behaviour of the extremist Ikhwan was wrong. For this reason, the 'Ulama asked King Abdulaziz to send more scholars and teachers to the rebellious Ikhwan (Wahbah, 1964:129; al-Rayhani, 1988: 433-434; Habib, 1998:145-146; Vassiliev, 1998: 229-230).

In 1920, during the dispute between Najd and Kuwait of 1920-1921, over Qariah al-'Ulia', al-Dawish decided to attack al-Jahra' in Kuwait without having obtained the permission of Ibn Saud, who thus found himself in the position of having to support al-Dawish in order to protect his followers of the Mutair and guard part of his state. In 1923, al-Dawish led another attack, this time against the tribes in the south of Iraq, even though Ibn Saud had signed the Treaty of al-'Uqair in 1922, which settled the frontier line between Najd and Iraq. Through this attack, al-Dawish tried to show that he refused to accept this kind of restrictions regarding grazing lands. In 1922, thousands of Ikhwan invaded Trans-Jordan and penetrated to within twelve miles of Amman. This force was completely eliminated by British airplanes and armoured cars, and Ibn Saud had punished the rest for attacking Trans-Jordan without his

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; and by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

permission. The Ikhwan repeated their raid into Iraq in 1924 as part of the many frontier disputes between Iraq, al-Hijaz, Trans-Jordan and Najd, which led to the Conference of Kuwait in 1923-1924 (Troeller, 1976: 170-198; al-Rayhani, 1988:270-330; Habib, 1998:182-186; Vassiliev, 1998: 253-257).

During the 1920s, the Ikhwan became a double-edged weapon in King Abdulaziz's hand. He could make use of them (as a military force) against his enemy, on the one hand, but they became a source of trouble and a real threat to his state's unity and his leadership, on the other.<sup>1</sup> The Ikhwan started to embarrass him with his neighbours. The Ikhwan attacked neighbouring states, sometimes with the permission of Ibn Saud, but on many occasions without it<sup>2</sup> (Philby, 1948:221-222; Lewis, 1933: 520; Almana, 1980:81-82). Moreover, Ibn Saud knew that all the small states around him, from Aden to Kuwait, in addition to Trans-Jordan and Iraq in the north, were under the protection of Britain either in accordance with Mandate arrangements or through protectorates treaties or by direct colonisation, such as the case of Aden. He also foresaw that the Ikhwan's lust for conquest after al-Hijaz would bring them face to face with the British army. He felt that he should lead the Ikhwan himself and share their defeat, for if he refused to lead them, they would turn their anger against him (Howarth, 1964:154).

After the conquest of al-Hijaz, due to their fanaticism, the relationship between Ibn Saud and the extremist Ikhwan deteriorated further.<sup>3</sup> The Ikhwan in al-Hijaz condemned customs that were un-Islamic according to their belief (Hanbalism) and began to put their own stamp on the life of the people of al-Hijaz. After they entered Makkah, the fanatic Ikhwan destroyed all the tombs, the memorial of Prophet's

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This was confirmed by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004; this was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.



birthplace, the house of the Prophet's wife (Khadija), and the house of Abu Bakr. They also prevented the people from practising some of their beliefs and customs, such as al-Mawlid al-Nabawi (celebration of the Prophet's birthday). They also forced the people to quit tobacco smoking because of their belief that smoking was forbidden. In 1926, during the Hajj, the Ikhwan involved Ibn Saud in a political crisis with the Egyptian Government when they attacked the Egyptian pilgrimage convoy (al-Mahmal). They were very aggressive with the people in al-Hijaz, trying to force them to follow their beliefs, and acted in a similar fashion in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula and even in the neighbouring states, and so became hated by the people (al-Rayhani, 1988:370; Habib, 1998:196-200; Vassiliev, 1998: 269-270; Kostiner, 1985:314).

In al-Hijaz, the Ikhwan were shocked by modern technological tools. The puritanical Ikhwan considered them as the work of devil as they were not mentioned in the Koran. They stood against the wristwatch, automobiles, bicycles, wireless, telephones and all other modern tools, without which the development of the Kingdom would have been impossible. As we have noted, the Ikhwan's deep suspicious of modern technological inventions was supported by many of the 'Ulama of Najd. But Ibn Saud maintained that not everything deriving from Western culture and modernity was evil and he was determined that no one would be permitted to stop his state's development. He always tried to be patient with the puritanical Ikhwan and attempted to change their ideas peacefully, but whenever he felt that compliance with their desires would weaken his authority, he would exercise that authority with an iron hand (Wahbah, 1964:47-63; al-Zirikli, 1977b: 99; Almana, 1980:83-84; al-Rasheed, 2002:65).

In 1926, the leaders of the Ikhwan started to function as the political elite in Najd and tried to shape Ibn Saud's external policy, as they had already intervened in the state's internal affairs. At the same time, they were frustrated when they witnessed Ibn Saud appointing the Hijazis into the administration and the Consultative Council (Majlis al-

Shura).<sup>1</sup> It is maintained that some of the Ikhwan rebel leaders felt that their privileges as tribal chieftains would be terminated as a result of increased authority of Ibn Saud.<sup>2</sup> The senior leaders of the Ikhwan, such as Faisal al-Dawish and Sultan Ibn Bijad, started to claim their political interests and threatened Ibn Saud.<sup>3</sup> They felt that they should be upgraded from tribal chieftains to Amirs of the newly conquered cities as a reward for their efforts.<sup>4</sup> Those leaders regarded themselves as partners in the new realm, rather than instruments.<sup>5</sup> This happened at a time when Ibn Saud dominated most of the Arabian Peninsula and was concerned to maintain the unity of his new state.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Saud felt that he should strengthen his authority in the influential possessions and cities by appointing only those whose loyalty was unquestionable (al-Zirikli, 1977b: 109; Helms, 1981:251-252; Kostiner, 1985:307-315; Habib, 1998:194-197; al-Rasheed, 2002:66).

In 1926, the leaders of the rebellious Ikhwan, especially Faisal al-Dawish, Sultan Ibn Bijad and Daidan Ibn Hithlain, met together in al-Artawiyyah and held a conference. They criticised Ibn Saud on several accounts, among them his relationship with the Kuffar (unbelievers), especially Britain. Moreover, they objected to the annual arrival of pilgrims from some states who engaged in un-Islamic practices. Ibn Saud tried to explain to them that his relations with such countries were important, because of their millions of Muslim residents.<sup>7</sup> Ibn Saud was also criticised for sending his sons abroad: Saud to Egypt and Faisal to Britain. They also accused him of limiting the Jihad (Holy War) against the people in Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan. Furthermore, they

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<sup>1</sup> During my interview with His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004, he strongly opposed this idea, arguing that their leaders were in dispute with Ibn Saud before the establishment of the Consultative Council. He added that they believed that they deserved to be more than counsellors.

<sup>2</sup> Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 2 January 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> This was stated by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004.

questioned the legitimacy of Ibn Saud's taxes. They also criticised the status of the Shi'ah in al-Hasa who, they believed, should be converted to Sunni Islam. The Ikhwan asked Ibn Saud not to use infidel instruments, such as telephone, radio, telegraph and cars.<sup>1</sup> They also questioned Ibn Saud's prohibition of trade with Kuwait, arguing that if Kuwait was infidel, Ibn Saud should wage war against it; if not, he should not restrict trade with it (Habib, 1998:203-204; Vassiliev, 1998: 273; al-Rasheed, 2002:65-66).

Despite the fact that the Ikhwan, from their early alliance with Ibn Saud, accepted his authority as the Imam (religious leader) who was responsible for dealing with foreign powers and calling for Jihad (al-Rasheed, 2002:61), the Ikhwan started to interfere in these two important matters. In the lights of their demands mentioned above, it is obvious that they were intervening in Ibn Saud's attempt to maintain unity of leadership and in the making of his foreign policy and international relations. Although, Ibn Saud had noted the early warning signs of the Ikhwan's rebellion, he was in great need of their support in his expansion to unify his realm. Therefore, he hoped that, with more patience, he could moderate their demands and diminish their fanaticism. However, in 1926, after their meeting in al-Artawiyyah, and with more raids over the frontiers, such as al-Dawish's raid on the new guard-post, built by the Iraqi Government in Busiyyah in 1927, they became a real threat to Ibn Saud and it was necessary for him to take action against their raids into the neighbouring states. If he did not stop them, it would have been seen either that he allowed them or had no control over them. When he heard of the revolts, and it seemed that the rebellion of the Ikhwan was getting beyond his control, he came back from al-Hijaz to Riyadh and called the 'Ulama and the leaders of the Ikhwan together for a conference (Williams, 1933:214-222; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 475-478; Habib, 1998:210-213; al-Tuwaijri, 1997: 201-204).

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

In 1928, a great assembly was held in Riyadh in order to discuss all the matters in question, including the replacement of Abdulaziz by another leader, if the Ikhwan as a whole so wished. However, the three rebel leaders did not attend the conference, although it was attended by thousands of people, headed by more than eight hundred of the Ikhwan leaders, and including most of the Royal Family princes, most of the 'Ulama and preachers, most of the tribal chieftains and other important townsmen and villagers.<sup>1</sup> The conference lasted for several days and resulted in a number of important resolutions, among them one rejecting the resignation of Ibn Saud. The conference resolved that there was nothing in Islam to disapprove an improvement in communications and the introduction of scientific progress. In addition, the relationship with the international community should be left to the Imam as long as he acted in accordance with the general principles of Islam. The conference also stated that the rebels were outlaws (*baghi*) which was a very important result to Ibn Saud at this time and gave him the legitimacy to take action against the rebellious Ikhwan with the full support of the 'Ulama and the majority of his loyal Ikhwan (Williams, 1933:223-227; Armstrong, 1934:274-277; al-Zamil, 1972: 244-262; Habib, 1998:213-222; al-Rasheed, 2002:67-68).

As a result of the great assembly in Riyadh 1928, each side, Ibn Saud and the rebellious Ikhwan, felt that each must work to weaken the other side. The rebellious Ikhwan felt that they should take the initiative and declared Holy War (*Jihad*) to attract more followers through their raids inside Iraq. Their action forced the British Government to attack them with airplanes in early 1929. In order to undermine the support enjoyed by the leaders of the rebellion, Ibn Saud sent more preachers to the people of the tribes loyal to the rebel leaders to clarify that they did not work for the glory of God but for their own interests, in view of the fact that they had not attended the great assembly and thus had no wish to discuss the contentious matters peacefully. This caused a great split in the major tribes then supporting the leaders of the rebellion. Even the tribes of 'Utaibah and Mutair divided into parties: one with the rebels and one against them. In addition, the rebels made fatal mistakes, such as the

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.00/13-1, despatch from C. K. Huston, the American Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 23 March 1929.

slaughtering of some merchants from al-Qaseem in 1928, which turned the majority of the people of Najd against them (Armstrong, 1934: 269-279; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 485-487; Habib, 1998:223-226).

In 1929, Ibn Saud was ready to punish the rebels. He performed the last act that was he needed to eradicate the rebellion completely. He coordinated with the British Government and came to terms with it. The agreement was that the British would not support the rebels, and would hand them to Ibn Saud if they fled into Kuwait, Iraq or Trans-Jordan. Britain was ready to help Ibn Saud because they knew that if Ibn Saud lost control, all the tribes would become rebels and would conduct raids over the frontiers. The leaders of the rebellious Ikhwan massed several thousands of their followers at al-Sibalah. Ibn Saud came to them with more than twenty thousand of his followers: the loyal Ikhwan from among the tribesmen, the majority of the 'Ulama and most of the townsmen and villagers. It was clear that the victory would be Ibn Saud's. He was not keen to attack them since that most of the rebels had been misled and had once been his followers. He negotiated with them and sent to them some of their respected 'Ulama, among them Abdulaziz Abu Habeeb and Abdullah al-'Angari, to bring them to the right side. He persisted for several days, repeating his offer of peace and calling on them to leave all the quarrels for the 'Ulama to solve.<sup>1</sup> The rebels refused and insisted on fighting. Thus, Ibn Saud, on 30 March 1929, attacked them from different directions. The battle lasted for a few hours, and several hundreds of the rebels were killed and others were injured, among them Faisal al-Dawish. Ibn Bijad left the battle and surrendered to Ibn Saud later when he heard that Ibn Saud had forgiven al-Dawish due to his surrender and his serious injury (Williams, 1933: 225-227; Almana, 1980: 95-114; Helms, 1981: 256-267; al-'Uthaimen, 1995: 288-299; al-Salloom, 1995: 341-346).

The Battle of al-Sibalah was decisive in the modern history of Saudi Arabia. Although it was not the last trouble Ibn Saud would have with rebels, it broke the

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

backbone of their movement. It enabled Ibn Saud to resume his full authority, especially in his foreign policy in the eyes of his neighbouring states. However, it is important to state here that the majority of the Ikhwan were with Ibn Saud and their loyalty to him as leader of the nation (Imam of 'Ummah) made them support him even against their brothers and cousins.<sup>1</sup> For example, Jihjah, the brother of Sultan Ibn Bijad, was with the majority of 'Utaibah and supported Ibn Saud.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the family of Dawish and the tribe of Mutair were divided among themselves between the two sides. Judging by the size of Ibn Saud's army, it is clear that most of the major families and tribes in Najd, such as Harb, Qahtan, Shammar and Subi', were with Ibn Saud, and their religious loyalty took precedence over their kinship<sup>3</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 487; *Almana*, 1980: 117; 'Attar, 1972:996-1000; al-'Uthaimeen, 1995:292-296; Habib, 1998:234-300).

After al-Sibalah, the rebels of al-'Ijman tribe had not yet been punished, so they continued their rebellion. The remaining rebels of al-Sibalah joined them. Faisal al-Dawish also joined them after he recovered. They became a real threat again when Muq'id al-Duhainah (with part of 'Utaibah) and Farhan Ibn Mashhur (with part of al-Ruwalah) joined them. Ibn Saud called his followers to mass again in al-Shawki. The rebels heard about Ibn Saud's movements and were keen to do battle: but they were defeated in several sporadic skirmishes and fled to Iraq and Kuwait, asking Britain to give them asylum. Ibn Saud insisted, through long negotiations with Britain, that the British should hand them over as they had pledged. Due to this commitment and on the insistence of Ibn Saud, the British handed over al-Dawish, Ibn Hithlain and Ibn Lami to Ibn Saud in Khabari Wadha in 1930, but kept back Ibn Mashhur, who was a subject of Syria. Ibn Saud kept those three leaders, together with Ibn Bijad, imprisoned for life (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 489-507; *Almana*, 1980: 121-139; Helms,

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<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

1981:259-271; Dickson, 2002: 341-342). That Britain handed over the three rebel leaders was a good indicator of the successful foreign policy of Ibn Saud.

Some writers argue that Ibn Saud saw the early warning signals of the rebellion in mid-1920s (al-Rasheed, 2002:65). Some hold that the crushing of the Ikhwan movement was inevitable. Howarth (1964:153) states, "*From the moment when this brotherhood was founded, a wise observer could have predicted its disastrous end*". Nevertheless, Ibn Saud avoided real conflicts with them for many reasons. Perhaps the most important was that he needed them to expand his authority over the other regions of the Arabian Peninsula and to consolidate his sovereignty over his neighbours. Habib (1998:246-249) and Vassiliev (1998: 231) have claimed that when Ibn Saud had accomplished his goals, the time became ripe for him to get rid of them.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, some historians have argued that the real reason for not punishing them earlier was that Ibn Saud was prepared to exercise his well-known patience, and hoped that they would change given more time (Wahbah, 1964:131; al-Tuwaijri, 1997: 201-218). Some other writers say that Ibn Saud did not plan to get rid of them, but they forced him to do so by their fanatical behaviour,<sup>2</sup> which embarrassed him internally and externally. Ibn Saud intentionally destroyed them before they could destroy him. He was compelled to crush them in order to preserve his gains,<sup>3</sup> and develop peaceful relations with the international community (Philby, 1952: 238; Troeller, 1976:128-129).

With the end of the Ikhwan rebellion, Ibn Saud became the unchallenged master in his state. He became the only authority, as he had always wanted, who had the right to make Saudi foreign policy and who was responsible for the establishment of its international relations.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea was strongly opposed by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

<sup>2</sup> This was stated by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak during my interview with him in Riyadh on 17 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

## **Chapter Four: Saudi Arabia and the Affairs of the Peninsula**

### **4.1 General Features of King Abdulaziz's Policy towards the Peninsula**

Saudi Arabia has been described as the first Arabian state which was established independently outside European plans. Some writers, among them Benoist-Mechin (1965: 302) and Van der Meulen (1999: 120), have claimed that, among the Arabian countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the only state that was created and developed independently and without the will of Western powers. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy had distinctive characteristics that made it different from other Middle Eastern states. Indeed, with less influence from the West, Saudi Arabia acted with more freedom in making its foreign policy.

With less influence from the West, it was expected that Ibn Saud would follow in the footsteps of his predecessors and continually extend his authority. The Saudi state was expected to be based on unlimited expansion, especially if Ibn Saud followed the tenets of the enthusiastic Ikhwan. Indeed, the reign of Ibn Saud, in its first three decades, showed a real tendency to expand, thus resembling the two preceding Saudi states. After the annexation of al-Hijaz, the western part of the Arabian Peninsula, into the Saudi territories in 1926, it was therefore expected that Ibn Saud would turn to the east and extend his rule over the Gulf Emirates (Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Oman), especially given the old Saudi influence in most of these areas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/20/FO31, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 4 February 1906; India Office, R/15/1/710, yearly report by Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 23 September 1906.



This view was shared by most of the official British representatives in the Middle East, who, for many years, had been in close contact with Ibn Saud. Among them was Sir Percy Cox, who was the oldest and closest of the Englishmen who knew Ibn Saud. In 1927, Cox was said to have stated that Ibn Saud thought that he was justified in principle in regaining any territory that his forefathers had possessed a century before, whether as a conquered territory or as a sphere of influence, which included Oman. He added that as long as Britain paid him a subsidy he kept his hands off al-Hijaz, but when Britain ceased the subsidy he extended his authority over that area. Cox added that he had little doubt that in the course of time Ibn Saud would seek to extend his authority over the interior of Oman (Goldberg, 1986:2).

Philby, who had worked with Ibn Saud and had known him personally for more than thirty years, and was one of the first to write about Ibn Saud and the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula, was said to have mentioned in 1927 that Ibn Saud would extend his authority over a greater area than it covered at that time and that the unification of Arabia in the wider sense of the term would increase to include even Yemen. Philby was also to have thought that the smaller Gulf entities would eventually cease to exist as independent principalities and would be absorbed into the vast Saudi state (ibid: 2). Moreover, David Hogarth, one of the central figures at the Arab Bureau in Cairo, shared this view. He stated in 1926 that "*Ibn Saud would perpetually find new lands to conquer*" (quoted in ibid: 2). Hogarth even suggested that the Saudis should occupy the countries of Southern Arabia - Yemen, Hadramawt and Oman (ibid: 2-3). According to this view, it would appear that the British policy toward Ibn Saud was based on suspicions regarding his ambitions to expand his authority over the British protectorates in the region. This raises the question whether there was a real threat from King Abdulaziz to his neighbours?

King Abdulaziz believed that he had the right to bring any part of the Arabian Peninsula, which had been governed by his ancestors, under his authority<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1397; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:292). Zahlan (1982:69-70) notes that in 1935, King

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/18/B450, report by the India Office on the Gulf, dated 25 June 1935.

Abdulaziz had already expressed his attitude to this matter and explained to the British representatives that the people of the Gulf Shaikhdoms were his subjects, and that they had been the subjects of his father and grandfather before him, but he referred to their own wish to be under British protection. There could be no question in his mind, however, that the rulers of these Shaikhdoms could lay claim to anything but the towns; the deserts and the allegiance of the tribes roaming those deserts had always been under his sovereignty and that of his ancestors<sup>1</sup> (ibid: 70).

However, even though Ibn Saud's view regarding the expansion of his state was different from that of his predecessors, he fully understood the horrible lesson of the destruction of the former Saudi states. He realised that he could not enjoy complete freedom of action. He believed that if his actions affected the interests of the Powers around him, this might cause them to react against him, in order to protect what they perceived as important interests (Harran, 1999:366-367). Ibn Saud concluded that he must distinguish between areas where he had full freedom of action and the areas such as the coasts, which would bring confrontation with the international powers, mainly Britain. Gause III (2000:172) believed that *"Britain protected the Shaikhdoms from outside threats (Saudi Arabia, Ottomans, Iraq and Iran), from each other, and at times, from their own people"*.

Ibn Saud believed that if he got involved with Britain or other strong Powers, they would not only hinder Saudi expansion but might destroy Saudi independence altogether. He felt that he should avoid any conflict with those Powers, even though he detested their policy. Ryan (1951: 278) believed that Ibn Saud *"was in his heart hostile to all Western influences, including that of Great Britain, but he knew that British friendship was a condition of his survival."* With regard to the British, Ibn Saud himself said that he hated their policy, but as long he stayed alive there would not be war with Britain, due to his friendship with many British people, among them

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004; India Office, R/15/2/158, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 6 July 1935.

Shakespear, Cox, Philby, Clayton, and not because of the British policy (Van der Meulen, 1999: 71).

After the conquest of al-Hijaz, Ibn Saud realised that he had reached the maximum expansion that he could achieve without getting involved in a dispute with Britain, the Power which surrounded him from every direction. Ibn Saud worked to consolidate his relations with Britain through several treaties, culminating in the Treaty of Jeddah in 1927.<sup>1</sup> This treaty acknowledged the sovereignty of his state and enabled him to establish his relationship with the international community (Wahbah, 1960:84-87). It should be noted that King Abdulaziz undertook, in both treaties, with Britain, namely Darin in 1915 and Jeddah in 1927, to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with the Gulf states of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the Shaikhdoms of the Omani Coast, which had special relations with Britain and had agreed treaties with it.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Britain represented all the Gulf Shaikhdoms in their foreign affairs. As such, Ibn Saud's relations with these states were subject to the supervision of Britain, as will be explained later in this chapter.

Some writers believe that King Abdulaziz, thirty years after the conquest of Riyadh, had reached the pinnacle of his glory. His realm covered most of the Arabian Peninsula in the form of a real consolidated state, which not had been accomplished during any of his ancestors' reigns. This was implemented with maximum expansion, taking into consideration the international circumstances at that time. He was recognised as "master of the Arabian Peninsula" by most of the influential Powers in the Middle East (Pison, 1999:292). In addition, Ibn Saud was seen as one of the most influential leaders and was described as a great Arabian reformer of that era, who had established his realm and founded a united state for his nation (Ql'aji, 1971: 275-278; al-'Aqqad, N.D: 34).

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<sup>1</sup> Text in India Office, L/P&S/10/1166, copy of the Treaty of Jeddah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton dated 20 May 1927.

<sup>2</sup> L/P&S/10/387, copy of Darin Treaty between Ibn Saud and Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 26 December 1915; L/P&S/10/1166, copy of the Treaty of Jeddah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton dated 20 May 1927.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a perceptible shift took place in Ibn Saud's foreign policy. It was at this time that Ibn Saud felt that he should divert his concern toward internal affairs rather than further territorial expansion. Indeed, this was one of the important reasons behind his dispute with the rebellious Ikhwan, which led to his decision to moderate their influence in order to make his state more stable. This consideration was indicated by the announcement, in September 1932, of a new name for his state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to designate its ruler and its policies, which gave the state its new identity (Goldberg, 1986:3; Van der Meulen, 1999: 144-145). To emphasise this further, al-Zirikli (1977a:1321) quoted the German writer Breukelman's description of Ibn Saud's policy in this period as having worked to consolidate his internal authority, rather than expand it territorially.

It is also worth mentioning here that during the period, from mid-1920s to mid-1930s, most of the important governmental institutions were created, such as Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), from which all governmental rules and laws were issued. Other institutions including the judicial system, police authority, finance department and foreign affairs department were established. Also, offices dealing with public health, management of ports, telegraph, telephone, radio networks and transportation were created. Thus, it can be seen that King Abdulaziz was the leader who opened the door to modernisation at every level in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (al- Zirikli, 1977a:576-580; Kostiner, 1993:104-105).

## **4.2 Ibn Saud's Relations with the Gulf Shaikhdoms**

### **4.2.1 Kuwait**

It is worth mentioning that the two royal families in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait descended from one old Arabian clan (Rabi'ah), which worked to strengthen the relations between the two states. In addition, there were many influential families

in Kuwait, among them the family of al-Sabah, which had emigrated from Najd, and most of these families maintained relations with the original families. Due to this, many matters of mutual interest and support were adopted, which, in general, created good relations between the two states (Dickson, 2002: 15-30; Mustafa et al., N.D: 367; al-Rasheed, 1963:18). The early relationship of Ibn Saud with Kuwait started when he was exiled, together with his family, to that country after the occupation of Riyadh by Ibn Rasheed. These relations were strengthened further after Ibn Saud retook Riyadh in 1902, due in no small part to the support he had received from Kuwait.<sup>1</sup> During the establishment of their states, Ibn Saud and Ibn Sabah built their relations on the basis of their respective political interests. This, of course, led sometimes to clashes between them, especially over boundaries. However, their need for one another's aid against their enemies, mainly Ibn Rasheed and the Ottomans, encouraged them to settle such problems quickly (Wahbah, 2000:250).

However, the relationship between Ibn Saud and Mubarak al-Sabah eventually declined, for a number of reasons, which ended the close alliance between them. The expansion of Ibn Saud, mainly into al-Hasa and al-Qaseem, was important among these reasons. In addition, Mubarak felt that Ibn Saud would use al-Hasa as a seaport to the world instead of Kuwait, which would economically affect Kuwait,<sup>2</sup> and this was indeed true. Of course, this made Ibn Sabah feel that Ibn Saud would become a new threat to his state. Hence, he worked to minimise Ibn Saud's ambitions. When in 1914 Ibn Saud signed his first treaty with Turkey in al-Subaihiyyah, Mubarak was unhappy about it and worked to prevent it. As a result of this, Mubarak cooperated with Ibn Rasheed in order to balance the powers in Najd and secure for himself an advantageous position between them. However, this dispute did not prevent military cooperation between Ibn Saud and Mubarak against the rebel tribes (al-Sa'doon, 1983:113-153; al-Rayhani, 1988:152&212-216; al-Salim, N.D: 67).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/18/B251, report prepared by the Arab Bureau in Iraq, dated 12 January 1917; L/P&S/12/3737, report by Major More, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, dated 13 December 1927.

<sup>2</sup> This was opposed by Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter during my interview with him in Riyadh on 19 January 2004.

Moreover, the attitudes of the two leaders toward the First World War were different and this led to more disagreements between the two states. Ibn Sabah insisted that Ibn Saud should take the British side, through many letters included in his counsels to Ibn Saud<sup>1</sup> (Abu Zlam, 1984:427). Some historians have posed an important question here regarding the real reason behind Ibn Sabah's insistence that Ibn Saud should declare war against the Turks. Al-Sa'doon (1983:169) argued that Ibn Sabah feared the new strength of Ibn Saud's state, and he pressed him to take Britain's side during the war, and thus come under British influence.<sup>2</sup> This would give Britain a good opportunity to control him if he intended to attack Kuwait.<sup>3</sup>

To preserve its interests, Britain asked Ibn Sabah to convince Ibn Saud to join the British in their actions against Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Ibn Saud did not follow this advice and preferred to maintain a neutral position<sup>5</sup> (al-Ghulami, 1980:30; Abu Zlam, 1984:427). However, despite pressure from Britain on Ibn Saud to cooperate with the two Shaikhdoms of Kuwait and al-Muhammarah and to join them in their drive to occupy Basrah, Ibn Saud did not agree directly. He gave an intelligent and noncommittal answer, saying that he would like to collaborate with his two friends to reinforce the common interests of all his friends.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Saud's response made the British feel that they could make an agreement with him. However, both sides, Ibn Saud and Britain, felt a real need for cooperation under the pressure of the situation in World War One.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/5/25, despatch from William G. Grey, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 21 October 1914.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 1 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> India Office, R/15/5/25, despatch from William G. Grey, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 21 October 1914.

<sup>5</sup> This was also confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

<sup>6</sup> India Office, R/15/5/25, despatch from William G. Grey, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 21 October 1914.

<sup>7</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/387, despatch from Ibn Saud to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 9 January 1915.

In November 1915, Mubarak Ibn Sabah died and was succeeded by his son Jaber. Jaber had a strong friendship with Ibn Saud, which smoothed the relations between them for more than a year, until Jaber's death in February 1917. Also, a more important reason for the good Saudi-Kuwaiti relation was the improvement in Saudi-British relations, which led to the achievement of the Darin Treaty on 26 December 1915. However, some writers have challenged this view, arguing that the improvement in Saudi-Kuwaiti relations was the reason for this treaty. Al-Sa'doon (1983:184) quoted Husain Khaz'al, who held that this agreement between Ibn Saud and Britain would not have been easily accomplished if Saudi-Kuwaiti relations had been as they were in the last days of Mubarak's reign.

Salim al-Sabah succeeded his brother Jaber in 1917. The two brothers were completely different, especially in their relations with Ibn Saud. With Salim in power the tensions in Saudi-Kuwaiti relations started again and augmented gradually, leading in the end to military conflict. The dispute between them began as a result of Ibn Sabah's support for the tribal rebels of Shammar and al-'Ijman who had risen against Ibn Saud and his welcoming them in Kuwait. Ibn Sabah was reacting to Ibn Saud's attempt to bring al-'Awazim, a major tribe of Kuwait, under his dominion<sup>1</sup> (Philby, 1952:63-64; Abu Hakimah, 1984:345). The dispute reached its climax in September 1919, when Salim decided to build a fortress in Balbool, which the Kuwaitis regarded as the southernmost point of their country. This was seen by Ibn Saud as an invasion of his territory. Ibn Saud asked Salim to withdraw, and also wrote to the British Agent in Kuwait, asking him to prevent Ibn Sabah achieving his goal<sup>2</sup> (al-Rayhani, 1988: 271; Abu Hakimah, 1984:345; Dickson, 2002: 260-261).

Moreover, in April 1920 the clan of Mutair established a new Hijrah (settlement) in Qariah al-'Ulya, which was considered by Ibn Sabah as a hostile action by the Saudis. Salim complained to the British Agent and also warned the Mutair people in Qariah

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/513, despatch from Robert E. Hamilton, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to the British Indian Government on 2 April 1918.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, R/15/2/34, despatch from the British Political Agent in Bahrain to the British Delegate in Baghdad on 11 March 1919.

to abandon it. When the Saudis did not respond, Ibn Sabah decided to use his own warriors, sending a Kuwaiti force of around four hundred. This made Ibn Shuqair, the head of the settlers in Qariah, seek help from the Mutair leader, Faisal al-Dawish, who responded immediately with more than two thousand of the Ikhwan, who routed the Kuwaiti army at the Battle of Hamd (al-Mukhtar, 1957:225; Abu Hakimah, 1984:346-347; al-Rayhani, 1988: 271-272; Dickson, 2002: 261). This was the first time the two states were involved in a military conflict. Therefore, it is important here to analyse this dispute and try to find the real reason behind this deterioration in Saudi-Kuwaiti relations.

It is true that each side saw the ambition of the other to expand their territory over more lands as the real reason. Some writers mentioned that the Kuwaiti people believed that their southern boundary should be at Jabal Manifah according to the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of July 1913<sup>1</sup> (Troeller, 1976:170; Abu Hakimah, 1984:346-347; Dickson, 2002: 262). Ibn Saud did not agree with this, for he considered this agreement to be redundant since it was not ratified by these two powers, as a result of the First World War. Also, Ibn Saud believed that these two powers were not allowed to set the boundaries between the Gulf States after he expelled the Turks from al-Hasa. Moreover, Ibn Saud insisted that the Turks did not have any influence over the internal lands and their people.<sup>2</sup> He relied in his belief on article six of the Anglo-Saudi treaty of Darin in 1915, which provided that Ibn Saud would refrain from all aggression on, or interference with, the territories of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman Coast, or tribes and Chiefs, who were under the protection of the British Government, and the limits of whose territories shall be hereafter determined<sup>3</sup> (al-Sa'doon, 1983:214-216; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:250-251).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/B381, copy of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement dated 29 July 10913.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, R/15/2/158, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 6 July 1935.

<sup>3</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/387, copy of the Darin Treaty between Ibn Saud and Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 26 December 1915.



As a result of the difference between the views of the two sides, long negotiations started between Ibn Saud and Ibn Sabah to end this clash, and both of them agreed that Britain would be the arbitrator. During these negotiations they did not arrive at a compromise, which led to the battle of al-Jahra in October 1920, when al-Dawish attacked it, with more than four thousands of his followers. Ibn Sabah was defeated in this battle, which caused him to ask Britain to protect him militarily. Britain sent its ships and airplanes and directly threatened the Ikhwan, which forced them to leave Kuwait (al-Mukhtar, 1957:225; al-Sa'doon, 1983:223-269; Abu Hakimah, 1984:346-347; al-Rayhani, 1988:272-276; Dickson, 2002: 263-266).

In the wake of al-Jahra, Britain worked with the two sides to resolve their disagreement over the boundary issue. During the negotiations, Salim al-Sabah died, in February 1921, and was succeeded by his nephew, Ahmad al-Jaber, who was a personal friend of Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud now declared that there was no need for further negotiations to specify the boundaries between the two states.<sup>1</sup> This attitude has led some writers to argue that Ibn Saud's dispute with Salim al-Sabah was driven by personal hatred between them<sup>2</sup> (Philby, 1928: 378-382; al-Khatrash, 1974: 117; al-Sa'doon, 1983: 273; Dickson, 2002: 266-267). It can be said that this hatred between Ibn Saud and Salim al-Sabah mainly resulted from their ambitions for more political achievements. In November 1922, in order to solve the problems over the boundaries between Najd and its northern neighbours, a meeting took place at al-'Uqair, and was chaired by Cox with Ibn Saud representing Najd and its Dependencies, Sabih Bey representing the Iraqi Government and Major James C. More, the Political Agent in Kuwait, representing the Kuwaiti Government. The meeting ended with the Treaty of al-'Uqair, signed on 2 December 1922, which drew the borders between the three countries, ending the struggle between them regarding the loyalty of tribes in the

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/3737, report by Major More, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, dated 13 December 1927.

<sup>2</sup> This was confirmed by His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah during my interview with him in Riyadh on 7-10 January 2004.

border areas and resolved the problems of the shepherds in these areas<sup>1</sup> (Troeller, 1976:179; Dickson, 2002: 282-290).

Despite the conclusion of the Treaty of al-'Uqair between Najd and Kuwait, the difficulties between them were not over. They had problems of another kind, such as tribal raids over boundaries, and trade and oil issues. Ibn Saud planned to invigorate his new ports on the Gulf coast, such as al-Jubail, al-'Uqair and al-Qataif, due to his increasing need for more income to consolidate his authority and build his state. He imposed more taxes on imported goods, most of which came from Kuwait. The Kuwaiti merchants and the people of Najd were not accustomed to such taxes, due to the boundary system being new in their area. When Ibn Saud set up posts for the purpose of tax collection, the people started smuggling, and so Ibn Saud asked the Kuwaiti Government to cooperate with him by implementing one of three options: firstly, to agree that Ibn Saud could send some of his employees to Kuwait to collect the taxes for him; secondly, that Ibn Sabah pay Ibn Saud from his cabinet an amount equal to the payable taxes; or thirdly, that Ibn Sabah should appoint Kuwaiti employees to collect the taxes and pay them to Ibn Saud. Ibn Sabah refused all these options, considering them contradictory to the full sovereignty of Kuwait. As a result, Ibn Saud imposed economic sanctions and prohibited trade with Kuwait<sup>2</sup> (al-'Aqqad, 1974:244-245; al-Salim, N.D:114-115).

The Saudi-Kuwaiti economic dispute lasted for around twenty years and went through many long negotiations. In 1932, Prince Faisal visited Kuwait and discussed these issues without achieving any real advance. In 1935, with the direct intervention of the British to help solve this dispute, another conference was held in Kuwait to discuss several Kuwaiti proposals which had been rejected by King Abdulaziz. In 1938, direct negotiations took place between Saudi Arabia and the British Government (as the representative of the Kuwaiti Government in its foreign affairs).

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<sup>1</sup> Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp 5-9; India Office, R/15/5/100, despatch from Major More, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to Ibn Saud on 2 December 1922.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, R/15/5/53, despatch from Stuart G. Knox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Foreign Office on 20 June 1923.

Three new proposals for three different agreements were discussed. After long negotiations all three were signed in Jeddah on 20 April 1942. These agreements concerned friendship and good neighbourly relations, the extradition of criminals and a trade agreement<sup>1</sup> (Wahbah, 2000:87-88; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 240-241; al-'Aqqad, 1974:245).

Some historians consider the improvement in Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, which led to such agreements, to be due to King Abdulaziz's attitude to the Kuwaiti political crisis in the late 1930s. In late 1938, Iraq began an aggressive propaganda campaign, claiming that Kuwait was a part of the Basrah province. This was supported by some of the Arab nationalists in Kuwait, such as Abdullah al-Saqr, who led a revolt in March 1939 to overthrow the Kuwaiti Government and make the country part of Iraq. Ibn Saud's attitude was very supportive of Shaikh Ahmad al-Sabah<sup>2</sup> (al-Khamees, 1972:41-43). The Saudi-Kuwaiti relations improved further and they exchanged official visits in 1947. During these visits, they negotiated a mutual security and defence treaty which was signed on 28 July 1947 (al-Shurbasi, 1953:25-35; al-Husaini, 1975:31-32; al-Salim, N.D:117).

Before the end of King Abdulaziz's reign, several agreements were achieved between Saudi Arabia and the Emirate of Kuwait. Also, most of the disputes between them were resolved by compromise, including the administration of the neutral zone and the privilege of digging for oil in this area. This achievement stabilized Saudi-Kuwaiti relations and led to further improvement (al-Shuhail, 1987:164). However, it is important to emphasise that the good relationship between Ibn Saud and Britain, as the Power which had the right to represent Kuwait in foreign affairs, was significant in attaining these results.

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951.Pp275-293.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 March 1939; India Office, L/P&S/12/3758, report by Gerald de Gaury, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to the British Foreign Office dated 3 April 1939; India Office, R/15/5/127, despatch from Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 6 March 1939.

#### 4.2.2 Bahrain

From Ibn Saud's point of view, Bahrain was very similar to Kuwait, in terms of royal families and of residents. Ibn Saud acknowledged that the royal families in Bahrain and Kuwait were distantly related to him since they all descended from the same tribe. Accordingly, from the early days, he showed great respect for them (al-Shuhail, 1987:165; Zahlan, 1982:71). Moreover, there was a large community in Bahrain which originally came from Najd and maintained strong relationships with their people there. In general, the relationship of the Bahraini Royal Family and its people with the Saudis had been characterized by friendliness since the eighteenth century (al-Shuhail, 1987:165; Wahbah, 2000:102-104).

Ibn Saud's early political contact with Bahrain was during the First World War. This was when Ibn Saud appointed al-Qusaibi as a commercial agent in Bahrain to take care of the large Najdi community there.<sup>1</sup> In 1919, Shaikh 'Isa of Bahrain imposed more taxes on the merchandise which went to Ibn Saud's ports. This caused a decline in the relationship between them.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in May 1923, a sectarian dispute between the Najdi and Iranian people in Bahrain took place, which led to the intervention of the British and their insistence that Ibn Saud withdraw his commissioner from Bahrain due to his sympathetic attitude toward the Najdi people. Britain asked Ibn Saud not to send another commissioner without its prior agreement. This dispute led to the replacement of Shaikh 'Isa by his son Hamad,<sup>3</sup> and also forced many Najdi people in Bahrain to leave for the eastern province of Saudi Arabia (Qasim, 1973: 225-232; Madanat, 1970: 26).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/10/827, yearly report by Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated May 1913.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, R/15/2/204, despatch from Dickson, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, to the British Resident in Bushire on 6 December 1919.

<sup>3</sup> India Office, R/15/1/334, despatch from Stuart G. Knox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to Ibn Saud on 15 June 1923.

Ibn Saud did not agree with the British stance towards his representative and his people; he also insisted on the return of his commissioner, and agreed with Britain that al-Qusaibi should limit himself to commercial matters. Britain also agreed later that the Najdi people who had left Bahrain as a result of the 1923 dispute should return in 1927 (*ibid*). A relevant question arises here: Why did not Ibn Saud expand his authority to include Bahrain? These problems would have given him a good reason to intervene more directly in Bahrain's affairs. Of course the answer lies in Ibn Saud's recognition of his commitments regarding his treaties with Britain: Darin in 1915 and Jeddah in 1927. He knew that such an action would bring him into confrontation with British power.

The year 1927 witnessed a resumption of the good relationship between Ibn Saud and the Shaikh of Bahrain, as a result of Ibn Saud's undertaking in the Treaty of Jeddah to refrain from all aggression against, or interference in, the affairs of the Gulf states, including Bahrain as a Protectorate of Britain (Qasim, 1973:233-234). In addition, Ibn Saud was very supportive of Bahrain against the long-standing Iranian claims to sovereignty over the Shaikhdom when Iran disagreed with the terms of the Treaty of Jeddah, for this Treaty implicitly acknowledged the independence of Bahrain.<sup>1</sup> Iran saw the Treaty as undermining its ambitions in Bahrain. In addition, during 1927-1935, Iran protested to the League of Nations, claiming sovereignty over Bahrain, a claim which was subsequently rejected. In 1948-1949, Iran escalated its campaign and claimed sovereignty over Bahrain, which was not acknowledged by Ibn Saud and Britain (Farouhy, 1951: 97-102; Subhi, 1962:162-165; Qasim, 1973: 227-237; al-Baharna, 1968: 167-195).

In February 1930, Ibn Saud visited Bahrain for two days, and this visit reflected the strength of the Saudi-Bahraini relationship at that time. This visit took place despite the disagreement of the British Agents in Bahrain and Bushire. When Ibn Saud decided to make this visit, he sent two telegrams, one to Shaikh 'Isa and the other to

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/138, despatch from Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, to Hufhaniz Khan, the Deputy Persian Plenipotentiary Minister in London, on 18 January 1928.

the British Consulate, informing them of his intention. The British Agent, Colonel Biscoe, replied that Shaikh 'Isa was ill and not in al-Manamah to receive Ibn Saud. The message proved to be not true, since the sons of Shaikh 'Isa came the following morning to Ibn Saud and told him that their father was waiting to receive him. At their insistence, Ibn Saud agreed to come ashore, but told them that he did not wish to see the British Consul. Ibn Saud and Shaikh 'Isa were overjoyed by the visit, to the chagrin of the British Consul, who had tried to prevent Ibn Saud entering al-Manamah for fear that this would stir up further nationalist movements and demonstrations in Bahrain. Britain attempted later to justify its behaviour and apologised for the action of its Agent in Bahrain (Almana, 1980:140-141; Wahbah, 1960: 93-94).

On 16 November 1935, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain signed a tariff agreement,<sup>1</sup> and in April 1939, Shaikh Hamad visited King Abdulaziz in Ras Tannorah in Saudi Arabia and suggested a return visit. King Abdulaziz accepted his invitation and visited Bahrain for the second time on 2 May 1939. Ibn Saud stayed several days and enjoyed a warm welcome from the Government and people of Bahrain. During this visit, the people of Bahrain expressed their strong affection for King Abdulaziz through a great variety of activities. This visit was considered a clear indicator of the strong relationship between the two countries<sup>2</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 688; Belgrave, 1960: 109-111). The attitude of the British Agent toward this visit was different in comparison with the previous one. Britain welcomed Ibn Saud, due perhaps to the early signs of the Second World War and Britain's need to maintain good relations with Ibn Saud, as an influential leader in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp: 215-219; Public Record Office, FO 371/19005, despatch from Albert S. Calvert, the British Ambassador in Jeddah, to Prince Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, on 16 November 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23188, despatch from the British political Resident in Bushire to London on 7 April 1939; India Office, L/P&S/10/3767, report by Hugh Weightman, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, dated 21 May 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23188, despatch from the British political Resident in Bushire to London on 7 April 1939; India Office, R/15/2/140, despatch from Hugh Weightman, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Shaikh Hamad Ibn Khalaifah of Bahrain on 23 April 1939.

In general, the Saudi-Bahraini relationship improved day by day and remained strong. In comparison with the Saudi relations with the other Gulf states, such as that between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, this was much more cordial, which led some scholars to wonder about the reasons for difference. Some writers believed that Ibn Saud had no ambitions in Bahrain, since it was a small island with limited land and population in which he had little interest (Zahlan, 1982:71).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there were no real disputes over boundaries, since there were no land borders between them, which produced an environment conducive to good relations. However, both sides held several meetings and conducted long negotiations to discuss issues regarding the territorial waters and the small islands between them. These issues did not affect the Saudi-Bahraini relations and they were resolved after King Abdulaziz's death through the Sea Agreement of 1958 under King Saud.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Qatar

The Saudi-Qatari relationship was considered to be somewhat different in nature from those between Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring states. Qatar is not totally surrounded by the Gulf waters as Bahrain is, or by the sands of the Empty Quarter as Oman and the Oman Coast Shaikhdoms are. Also, Qatar is not like Kuwait, which was protected by the deserts of al-Dibdibah and the neutral zone resulting from the Treaty of al-'Uqair signed in 1922 with Britain. In addition, Qatar is next to al-Hasa, and so had been easily influenced by the policy and beliefs of the Saudis for many decades. This early contact led to the Qatari adoption of Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings and the creed of Ibn Hanbal during the eighteenth century (al-'Aqqad, 1974:155-156; al-Rayhani, 1988:113-114:15).

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat wa al-Ittifaqiyyat*, Part Two, 1936-1973. Pp 129-134; the Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.2, 1955. Pp: 128-129.

This of course, created a strong sympathy between the royal families of both states. A clear indicator of this was the migration of Imam Abdulrahman with his family, including his son Abdulaziz, to Qatar in 1890, directly after they were expelled from Riyadh (al-Dabbagh, 1961:186; al-Muzayyan, 1997:29). Moreover, the two royal families supported one another such as when Ibn Saud helped Shaikh Jasim Ibn Thani to restore his authority in 1905, against his brother Ahmad and rebellious tribes;<sup>1</sup> this was in recognition of Jasim's earlier support of Ibn Saud against Ibn Rasheed (al-Mansur, 1975:200-205; Abu Zlam, 1984:349-352).

In 1913, Ibn Saud took al-Hasa, which was seen by Ibn Thani as an indicator of the Saudi threat, as it would put an end to his own ambitions to bring al-Hasa under his authority. Ibn Thani therefore sent several letters to Ibn Saud telling him that he objected to the occupation of al-Hasa and also warning him not to invade Qatar. However, Shaikh Jasim died on 17 July 1913 and was succeeded by his son Abdullah, which led to improvements in Saudi-Qatari relations (Ali, 1957:136-137; al-Mansur et al., 1977:16). Shaikh Jasim had found himself surrounded by three powers, the Ottomans, Britain and Ibn Saud, which could have harmed his sovereignty. In these circumstances, and to avoid the anger of the Turks, he was obliged to protest formally to Ibn Saud opposing the occupation of al-Hasa. In addition, Ibn Thani allowed the Turks to deploy their forces in Qatar during their attempts to retake al-Hasa from Ibn Saud. At the same time, however, he sent his son Khalifah with his cousin to Ibn Saud to placate him, thus avoiding hostility. Moreover, Ibn Thani was more worried about the British ambitions in Qatar, due to the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913, in accordance with which the Ottoman Government renounced all rights over Qatar.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 248/844, report from Arthur P. Trevor, Deputy British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 15 October 1905; India Office, L/P&S/20/FO31, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 4 February 1906.

<sup>2</sup> L/P&S/10/827, report by Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, in May 1913; India Office, L/P&S/10/386, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 22 June 1913; India Office, R/15/2/30, despatch from Arthur P. Trevor, the British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 3 July 1913.



However, this Anglo-Turkish Agreement was the cause of most of the disputes in the region, due to the fact that Britain and the Gulf states, as its Protectorates, adhered to this Agreement with regard to boundary issues, while Ibn Saud did not recognise it at all.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Saud's opposition to the Agreement led Shaikh Abdullah of Qatar to become suspicious of Ibn Saud's ambitions. Despite Ibn Saud's treaty with Britain in 1927, which provided for the protection of Qatar as well as other states, and as a result of his apprehensions, Abdullah Ibn Thani entered into a secret agreement with Ibn Saud. In 1930, Shaikh Abdullah confessed to the British Political Agent in Bahrain that he had been paying Ibn Saud a secret annual subsidy of 100,000 rupees over the years to maintain his position<sup>2</sup> (Zahlan, 1979:82).

The competition over oil between the oil companies in the region, which were mainly British and American, was a major factor in the disputes over boundaries between the Gulf states, although the Gulf rulers were also involved in these issues. These oil companies, seeking to enhance their interests, wanted to work over specific areas in order to avoid obstructions due to boundary disputes which would cost them much<sup>3</sup> (Anderson, 1969: 28-31; al-'Aqqad, 1973:168). In these circumstances, the dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia became manifest in 1935, when Qatar was about to sign an agreement for preliminary oil concessions with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (Mursi, 1981:85; Zahlan, 1982:69). Ibn Saud warned the Shaikh not to conclude such an agreement until the boundaries between their states were settled<sup>4</sup> (Zahlan, 1982:69). Moreover, the Shaikh of Qatar admitted to the deputy of the British Political Agent in Bahrain in July 1935 that he did not dare to claim any land

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 381-382.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

<sup>3</sup> [http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/3040\\_1601.htm](http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/3040_1601.htm).

<sup>4</sup> India Office, R/15/2/158, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 6 July 1935.

south of Salwa or Khur al-'Udaid, during the life time of King Abdulaziz, because the tribes of those areas were very loyal to Ibn Saud.<sup>1</sup>

The arguments over the Qatari-Saudi border lasted for many years between the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Britain (which represented Qatar in terms of foreign affairs). The reason for these protracted arguments was the insistence by both sides on the right of dominion over small areas that showed strong signs of containing substantial oil reserves. This led Britain, as Qatar's representative, to insist on control over these areas, mainly those of Khur al-'Udaid and Jabal Nakhsh<sup>2</sup> (Kelly, 1964:199). The British motives became crystal clear during a meeting, which was held in al-Dammam in Saudi Arabia in 1952, one year before the death of King Abdulaziz. During this meeting, each side, Saudi Arabia and Britain, adhered to their old attitudes (Lenczowski, 1960: 145). Despite the British stance, the Shaikh of Qatar, who was attending the conference, announced that he considered King Abdulaziz as his "father" and he would accept the King's decision regarding the boundaries between their states.<sup>3</sup> This was not accepted by Britain, however, and the situation remained tense until the two states signed an agreement on 24 October 1965,<sup>4</sup> settling the boundary issue (Qasim, 1974:166).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/1/604, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 22 January 1935; India Office, R/15/1/605, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Percy G. Loch, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 15 August 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 384-382; India Office, R/15/1/607, despatch from Reader Bullard in Jeddah to Anthony Eden on 29 December 1936; India Office, R/15/2/160, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to Sir Louis Dane, the Secretary of the British Indian Government on 16 September 1906.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 413.

<sup>4</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat wa al-Ittifaqiyat*, Part Two, 1936-1973. Pp: 465-469.

Despite the unhelpful British stance, during the long arguments over the boundaries between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, King Abdulaziz remained very committed to his treaties with Britain, mainly Darin 1915, al-'Uqair 1922 and Jeddah 1927, in which he undertook not to practise any aggression against Qatar or the other Gulf states. On many occasions, he reiterated that those areas and the tribes roaming the deserts of such areas, had been ruled by his ancestors, but despite this he would not intervene in the affairs of the cities, due to his respect for his treaties with Britain and his desire to maintain his friendly relations with Britain and with those shaikhdoms<sup>1</sup> (Zahlan, 1982:69-70).

#### **4.2.4 The Shaikhdoms of the Lower Gulf and the Sultanate of Oman**

Those Shaikhdoms, which are now called the United Arab Emirates, consist of seven emirates. The Shaikhdoms are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, al-Sharjah, Ras al-Khaymah, al-Fujayrah, Um al-Quwain and 'Ajman. The Shaikhdom of Abu Dhabi is the most important of these seven, with regard to size and resources, followed by Dubai (Abu al-Hajjaj, 1978:238-239). The people of this area, which extends from the southern coast of the Arabian Gulf in the north, to the interior part of Oman in the south, are divided into two main groups. The first comprises the al-Hanawi people including Bani Yass, who in general were against the influence of Al Saud from the early years (al-'Abid, 1976:144). The other important group is that of the al-Ghafari people, who mainly consist of al-Qawasim and al-Nu'aim, who adopted the teachings of Ibn Abdulwahhab from the very beginning. Al-Qawasim were devoutly attached to these beliefs, which led to their sympathy for Al Saud, and as a result they created a good relationship with them, which they have maintained until the present era<sup>2</sup> (Mursi, 1978:86).

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/158, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 6 July 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 49-95; India Office, L/P&S/20/FO31, despatch from Percy Cox, the

In 1905, when Ibn Saud went to support Shaikh Jasim of Qatar, he sent several letters to the Shaikhs of the Omani Coast telling them that he wanted to visit them. Their reaction was negative, especially that of Shaikh Zayid Ibn Khalaifah, the Shaikh of Abu Dhabi, who wrote to the British Agent and also visited the Sultan of Oman, asking their advice and telling them of his fears of the expansion of Ibn Saud's influence into his territory. Shaikh Zayid asked Britain to take suitable measures to prevent Ibn Saud from making these visits.<sup>1</sup> Britain asked Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait to advise Ibn Saud not to visit the Shaikhdoms of the Omani Coast and to warn him that if he did so, it would be seen as an action hostile toward Britain.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Ibn Saud told Ibn Sabah that he did not intend to expand his authority into those territories and did not have any hostile intention towards them<sup>3</sup> (Sinan, 1969:89-90; al-Mansur; 1975:202). It is worth asking here if Ibn Saud had any prior intention to expand his authority into these areas. Indeed, from 1905-1913, Ibn Saud was engaged in his internal affairs in Najd with his traditional enemy, Ibn Rasheed and his allies the Turks. Also, Ibn Saud needed to establish friendly relations with the British and he asked them to recognise him several times. Thus, it would have been unlikely for Ibn Saud to have acted against Britain's wishes.

The relations of Ibn Saud with those Shaikhdoms and Oman remained as described for many years. With expanded relations with Britain, Ibn Saud was persuaded not to interfere in the internal affairs of those areas, in accordance with his treaties with

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British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 4 February 1906; India Office, R/15/1/556, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the Omani Coast Shaikhdoms on 22 April 1906; India Office, R/15/1/710, yearly report by Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 23 September 1906.

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 248/844, report by Arthur P. Trevor, Deputy British Political Resident in Bushire, dated 15 October 1905; L/P&S/20/FO31, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 4 February 1906.

<sup>2</sup> L/P&S/20/FO31, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 4 February 1906; India Office, R/15/5/24, despatch from Stuart G. Knox, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 7 March 1906.

<sup>3</sup> R/15/2/160, despatch from Percy Cox, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to Sir Louis Dane, the Secretary of the British Indian Government on 16 September 1906.

Britain at Darin in 1915 and Jeddah in 1927. The Treaty of Jeddah was a remarkable step by Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud stated clearly that he would not undertake any aggression against British Protectorates, among them were these Shaikhdoms of the Omani Coast. Due to Ibn Saud's commitment to this Treaty, the disputes with those Shaikhdoms and Oman were confined to the issue of boundaries; which escalated only as a result of the competition over oil in the region and the oil companies' need to specify their concession lines. In fact, the Saudi claims in the disputed areas relied on several factors, among them was the old loyalty of the tribes of these areas, the old dominion of the Saudis over these territories and the great efforts of the Saudi Government, which brought security and peace to the people of those areas (Kelly, 1980:72; Vassiliev, 1998: 165). Britain, as the representative of the Sultanate of Oman and the Omani Shaikhdoms, strictly refused any compromise based on the historical background or the tribal loyalties of the area towards Ibn Saud (Mann, 1964:34).

On 29 May 1933, King Abdulaziz gave the oil concession in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia to an American company (the Standard Oil Company of California), which angered the British Government. Consequently, the British Government revived the boundary issue, relying on the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913, which had always been opposed by Ibn Saud<sup>1</sup> (Sinan, 1969:196-197; Qal'aji, 1965:587-588; Mustafa et al., N.D. 109-110). In 1937-1939, the Sultan of Oman, Sa'ed Ibn Taimur, and the Shaikhs of the Omani Coast gave the oil concession in their territories to a British company (Petroleum Concession Limited).<sup>2</sup> This was the time when these oil

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 335; Public Record Office, FO 406/72, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 27 June 1934.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 337-338; Public Record Office, FO 371/20843, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 28 February 1937; Public Record Office, FO 371/21908, yearly report by Sir Reader

companies insisted, along with their governments, on defining the borders,<sup>1</sup> in order to work over specific areas, and to avoid any military clashes which would delay their work and cost them much (Anderson, 1969: 28-31; al-'Aqqad, 1973:168).

In fact, a main reason for the non-resolution of the border problems was that the British oil companies were interested in the area and they strongly competed with the American companies. The influence of Britain over Oman and the Shaikhdoms delayed the resolution of the disputes. As a result, the dispute over the boundaries remained a stumbling block in Saudi-Emirates and Saudi-Omani relations. The insistence of each of Saudi Arabia and Britain (representing the foreign affairs the Oman and Omani Coast Shaikhdoms) led to many inconclusive conferences being held to specify the boundaries between them. However, the outbreak of World War Two in 1939 induced both sides to shelve the boundary problems temporarily (Sa'ed, N.D.:136; Qal'aji, 1965:588).

In time, relations between the Sultan of Oman and the Shaikhs of the Omani Coast with King Abdulaziz developed for the better, as the Shaikhs had admiration for Ibn Saud. This improvement was concurrent with Ibn Saud's growing cordiality towards them. This brought the relations between them to a level where any problem could have been solved, had they been free to act without consulting Britain in the area. This was made clear through several letters which were sent to King Abdulaziz and to the British Agents in the region by these Shaikhs, among them the Shaikh of Abu Dhabi, who stated his great loyalty to King Abdulaziz, due to his belief in the unification of the Arabs. Also, he stated that he did not claim any lands or tribes under Ibn Saud's sovereignty and he would accept Ibn Saud's territorial claims, which

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Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 26 March 1937; India Office, L/P&S/12/2073, report from Alan Trott in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 1 October 1937.

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/20843, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 28 February 1937.

were located east of the blue line mentioned in the memorandum of the Saudi delegate, Fuad Hamzah.<sup>1</sup>

In 1949, more discoveries of oil in the disputed areas provoked renewed arguments between Britain and Saudi Arabia, which in turn led to several meetings: in London in August 1951, then in al-Dammam in January 1952 and later in Riyadh, in February 1952. All these conferences failed to solve the problems in question. Moreover, in September 1952, the Saudi Government sent Turki al-'Utaishan to be Governor of al-Buraimi, the main residential area in these territories. The British Government protested against this action and asked the Saudi Arabian Government to withdraw al-'Utaishan. King Abdulaziz refused to do so, which led to the military occupation of al-Buraimi by Britain. This was the first military dispute between Ibn Saud and Britain, which created the crisis of al-Buraimi between Saudi Arabia and Britain (acting on behalf of those Shaikhdoms and the Sultanate of Oman). This dispute remained unresolved for many years and continued even after the death of Ibn Saud in November 1953<sup>2</sup> (Sa'ed, N.D.:442-454; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1393-1399).

The Saudi Government believed that it had dealt with full honesty and fairness with the leaders and the people of the disputed area, which had declared their loyalty to the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia over a period of about 150 years.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Saudi Government was convinced that the British Government's policy was the sole cause

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948; R/15/1/604, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 22 January 1935; R/15/1/605, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to Percy G. Loch, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 15 August 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 396-427.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 359-362.

of these disputes over those areas, and without that policy, there would have been no problems with regard to the boundaries.<sup>1</sup>

### 4.3 Saudi Arabia and Yemen

Early official contact between Yemen and Saudi Arabia dated from the siege of Jeddah by Ibn Saud in 1925. Imam Yahya Ibn Hameeduddeen, the Imam of Yemen, wrote to Ibn Saud and King Ali, asking them to cease fighting and accept him as an arbitrator between them.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Saud replied him that he called on all Muslims to hold a conference to discuss the issue of al-Hijaz, adding that he hoped the Yemeni delegate would participate in this conference (al-Rayhani, 1988:418).

While Ibn Saud was busy with the conquest of al-Hijaz, the rivalry within the Idreesi family started after the death of Mohammed al-Idreesi. This led to a power vacuum in Jaizan, which had been committed to a neighbourhood treaty with Ibn Saud since 1920, when Ibn Saud occupied Asir. This situation emboldened the Imam of Yemen to occupy al-Hudaidah and attack Jaizan. The Yemeni armies penetrated the Idreesi Emirate and continued to the city of Maydi. During the advance of the Yemeni troops, al-Hasan al-Idreesi took control of Jaizan and asked for support from the Italians and British, but they declined. This coincided with Ibn Saud becoming the King of al-Hijaz and al-Idreesi saw that the only way to stop the advance of Yemenis into his land was to ask for the protection of Ibn Saud. In order to save what was left,

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 413-414; R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/10810, report by Stanley Rupert Jordan, Deputy British Consul in Jeddah, to Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 29 October 1925.



he signed the Treaty of Makkah with Ibn Saud on 21 October 1926,<sup>1</sup> which gave Ibn Saud the right to execute foreign affairs and stop any aggression against this region, leaving for al-Idreesi the control of internal affairs (Sa'ed, 1964: 190-192; al- Zirikli, 1977a: 535-536; Vassiliev, 1998:283; Wenner, 1967: 143-144; Wahbah, 2000:43-44). The Treaty designated Ibn Saud as protector of the Emirate of al-Idreesi. As a result Imam Yahya, with his ambitions in Jaizan, started new relations with Saudi Arabia and a long period of dispute ensued, which culminated in the Saudi-Yemeni war.

In June 1927, a Saudi delegation arrived in San'a to discuss the various boundary issues with Imam Yahya, who insisted that all of Asir was part of Yemen. This was seen by the Saudis as an extreme demand, which was refused. In December 1927, Ibn Saud sent another delegation to San'a with the aim of finding a solution to the boundary problems between the two states, but unfortunately the long discussion ended without any progress. In early 1928, a Yemeni delegation arrived in Makkah to negotiate the Saudi-Yemeni dispute but returned empty-handed to Yemen, due to the insistence of both sides on their demands. The main result of the three conferences was their implicit satisfaction with the current situation (Sa'ed, 1959: 79-81; Salim, 1963: 331-332). As a result and also due to the correspondence, which had a peaceful tone, between King Abdulaziz and Imam Yahya, the Saudi-Yemeni military conflict was delayed for several years. During this period each side worked towards a further consolidation of its control over the area.

Ibn Saud was in full control of Jaizan, when on 27 October 1930 al-Idreesi resigned, which gave Ibn Saud absolute power in the region (Wenner, 1967: 144; al- Zirikli, 1977:535-536; Vassiliev, 1998:283). The new situation in Jaizan made Ibn Saud feel more responsible towards the region and also gave him full freedom to deal with the Imam of Yemen. However, at the same time, the Imam of Yemen established secret contacts with the Idreesis. Imam Yahya thought if he supported the Idreesis in a revolt, this would help him assert his authority over Najran, the coastal strip of Jaizan

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.014, despatch by Henry P. Fletcher at the American Embassy in Rome to the American Secretary of State, on 25 February 1927.

and the southern region of Asir. Consequently, he proceeded to occupy the mountain of al-'Aru in southern Asir, which led to the first military conflict between Yemen and Saudi Arabia in 1931 (Philby, 1955:322; Vassiliev, 1998:283). As a result, immediate negotiations started and the Imam of Yemen stated that he wanted Ibn Saud to be the arbitrator for this problem and that he would be satisfied with Ibn Saud's decision.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Saud decided to let the Imam have al-'Aru and the Agreement of al-'Aru was signed in December 1931. In this agreement, both sides agreed on cordial bilateral relations and mutual coordination<sup>2</sup> (Philby, 1952:184; Sa'ed, 1959: 201; Salim, 1963: 344-346; al-Ghulami, 1980:79).

Despite the signing of the Treaty of al-'Aru, more serious clashes took place in 1932-1933 over the disputed areas when Yemeni troops occupied Najran. Ibn Saud's reaction was swift: he sent Khalid Ibn Luway to head a troop of Saudi tribesmen, who drove the Yemenis out of Najran and formally annexed the land in the name of Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud sent a delegation to San'a to discuss all the boundary issues, with the hope that Imam Yahya would accept this graceful step. In response, Imam Yahya reasserted his claim to southern Asir with new military operations. Ibn Saud therefore strengthened his army in the area and issued an ultimatum to Imam Yahya. He proposed that the Imam of Yemen should withdraw from the occupied territories, restore the former borders and extradite the rebels of the Idreesis<sup>3</sup> (Philby, 1955:322; Vassiliev, 1998:285; al-Ghulami, 1980:86).

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 413; the Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Kitab al-'Akhdar: al-'Alaqa al-Su'udiyah al-Yamaniyyah*, 1934, Makkah: Matba'at Umm al-Qura, Pp: 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp 101-102.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/17925, daily report on the Saudi-Yemeni conflict, covering the period from 3 January to 5 May 1934, sent by the British Embassy in Jeddah to London; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

In late February and early March 1934, a new meeting between the two monarchs was held in the city of Abha in Saudi Arabia. King Abdulaziz moderated his attitude and proposed to make Najran a neutral zone between the two states. However, Imam Yahya avoided giving a definite response. As a result, King Abdulaziz insisted on the three demands mentioned above and designated 5 April 1934 as a deadline; if the terms were not accepted, war would ensue.<sup>1</sup> The deadline for the ultimatum expired and so on 5 April, Ibn Saud ordered two separate Saudi armies, headed by his sons Prince Saud and Prince Faisal, to attack Yemen<sup>2</sup> (Philby, 1952: 185; Wenner, 1967: 145; al-Zirikli, 1977a:603; Vassiliev, 1998:285).

Crown Prince Saud was to attack the mountain strongholds of north Yemen from Najran, while Prince Faisal was to work his way south down the Tihamah. Crown Prince Saud set out from Najran to attack the north-east of Yemen. He met strong resistance in the mountains where Yemeni tribesmen were able to impede the progress of the Saudi troops, who were unfamiliar with the difficulties that mountain passes pose for an army on the march. Meanwhile, Prince Faisal set out from Jaizan and drove his way south. An enemy force, based at the town of Haradh, blocked his path but, in the ensuing battle, the Saudi troops were victorious and Prince Faisal was able to progress to the western coast of the Yemen, until he occupied al-Hudaidah<sup>3</sup> (Philby, 1955:322-323; al-Zirikli,

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Kitab al-'Akhdar: al-'Alaqat al-Su'udiyah al-Yamaniyyah*, 1934, Makkah: Matba'at 'Umm al-Qura, Pp: 81-85; Public Record Office, FO 371/17925, daily report on the Saudi-Yemeni conflict, covering the period from 3 January to 5 May 1934, sent by the British Embassy in Jeddah to London; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/17925, daily report on the Saudi-Yemeni conflict, covering the period from 3 January to 5 May 1934, sent by the British Embassy in Jeddah to London; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/17925, daily report on the Saudi-Yemeni conflict, covering the period from 3 January to 5 May 1934, sent by the British Embassy in Jeddah to London; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

1977a:603; Vassiliev, 1998:285-286; al-'Uthaimen, 1995:281-285). The fall of al-Hudaidah was followed by an extremely confused situation, which led to some efforts by the Arabs, such as an Arab delegation consisting of Hajj Amin al-Husaini, Shakeeb Arsalan, Hashim al-Atasi and Mohammad Allubah which arrived to Saudi Arabia and asked Ibn Saud to stop the war (al-Zirikli, 1977a:604; al-'Uthaimen, 1995:286).

Furthermore, the warships of Britain, France, and Italy advanced toward al-Hudaidah to urge moderation. Also, the Italians, who were inclined to support the Imam, landed troops there (Vassiliev, 1998: 286). Ibn Saud understood that these European Powers would not allow him to annex the whole of Yemen.<sup>1</sup> Also, with Prince Faisal's occupation of al-Hudaidah, the Imam of Yemen had been persuaded to send a letter to Ibn Saud informing him that he agreed to Ibn Saud's three terms of peace.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the King accepted and offered terms for peace, ordering a cessation of hostilities and inviting Imam Yahya to discuss the demarcation of a new frontier between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. On 15 May 1934, a formal armistice was arranged between the Saudi and Yemeni forces to allow Imam Yahya to fulfil the terms of peace which Ibn Saud had stipulated. On 20 May 1934, the Treaty of al-Taif was signed by Prince Khalid, representing Saudi Arabia and the representative of Yemen, Abdullah al-Wazeer.<sup>3</sup> The treaty provided for the establishment of a peaceful friendship between the two states and for mutual recognition of independence and sovereignty. The

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/17935, report from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 2 June 1934; Public Record Office, FO 371/17926, despatch from Eric Drummond, the British Ambassador in Rome, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 4 May 1934; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/17935, report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 2 June 1934.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'atal-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp:152-198; India Office, R/15/2/638, despatch including the text of the Saudi-Yemeni Treaty of 1934, from the British Embassy in Jeddah to London, dated 4 May 1934.

Saudi forces were to be withdrawn from the occupied territories and the Imam had to abandon all claims to Asir, Najran and Jaizan (Philby, 1952:186-188; al-Zirikli, 1977a:603-611; Abu Zlam, 1984:532-534; al-Ghulami, 1980:87-88; Vassiliev, 1998: 286).

The Treaty of al-Taif, in contrast to al-'Aru Agreement, was successfully fulfilled and peaceful relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia were established. The King's insistence on settling all the boundary issues and on defining the position of the two countries over the disputed territories in an authenticated treaty was the main reason for the improvement of the Saudi-Yemeni relationship. That an improvement had occurred was made clear by the Imam Yahya's response the assassination attempt on Ibn Saud during the Hajj of 1935, which could be considered as the first real test for the Treaty of al-Taif. Following the end of the war with Yemen, Ibn Saud performed the Hajj and while circumambulating the Ka'abah in the centre of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah on 15 March 1935, he was attacked by three Yemenis.<sup>1</sup> He was saved by the prompt and courageous action of his son, Prince Saud, who inserted himself between his father and the Yemeni assailants, receiving a knife wound to his shoulder. The royal guards opened fire and the assailants were shot dead (Philby, 1952:188; al-Zirikli, 1977a:619-621; Vassiliev, 1998:286). Imam Yahya, concerned that he might be implicated in the plot, immediately sent a message to Ibn Saud deploring the assassination attempt and declaring his joy and relief that Ibn Saud had survived it. Moreover, the King himself announced that he believed that the Imam was innocent.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the relationship between the two dynasties steadily improved and cooperation began between the two states.

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/2082, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 15 March 1935; American Archives, 890 F.001 Ibn Saud/14, despatch from Ray Atherton, the American Ambassador in London, to the American Secretary of State, on 21 March 1935.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/2082, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 15 March 1935.

Saudi-Yemeni relations improved further when Imam Yahya decided to join the Saudi-Iraqi Charter for Arab Brotherhood and Alliance, which was established on 2 April 1936 between Iraq and Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup> Thus on 26 August 1937, Yemen became the third member of the Saudi-Iraqi-Yemeni Charter of Arab Brotherhood and Alliance, which stated that any Arab state had the right to join them<sup>2</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1199-1200; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:289). However, Yemeni-Saudi relations experienced further problems during the incidents of 1948, which culminated in the assassination of Imam Yahya. Ibn al-Wazeer, the leader of the revolt, sent a delegation to Ibn Saud requesting Ibn Saud's recognition or goodwill, but Ibn Saud supported Crown Prince Saif al-Islam Ahmad against the usurpers with a view to restoring his throne. Ibn Saud's attitude towards the usurpers became clear when he described them as murderers, while addressing their delegation in a public assembly, and ordered them to leave his country (Philby, 1952:190-192; Sa'ed, 1959: 136-144; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1301-1312). This illustrated how Saudi-Yemeni relations after the Treaty of al-Taif remained strong and continued to be stable. Moreover, Ibn Saud's attitude towards the Imam of Yemen during the 1948 revolt was a good indicator of his strong influence and also of his commitment to his treaties with Yemen, even with regard to the internal affairs of Yemen, which could influence the stability of Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp: 220-224; Public Record Office, FO 371/20056, despatch by Sir Archibald C. Kerr, the British Ambassador in Baghdad, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 8 April 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp: 241-244; Public Record Office, FO 371/20838, copy of the Saudi-Iraqi-Yemeni Treaty of 1937, dated on 15 August 1937.

## **Chapter Five: King Abdulaziz and the Arab World**

### **5.1 The Palestinian Problem**

#### **5.1.1 The King's Action on the Palestinian-Arab Front**

The Balfour Declaration, issued on 2 November 1917, committed Britain to support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine (Williams, 1933: 122; Howarth, 1964:107). Weizmann (1936:671-672) acknowledged that when Palestine emerged from the Great War it had a Jewish population of only fifty thousand, adding that Palestine was a small country where land was not plentiful and where the Arabs population was certainly not ready to receive them with open arms. Of all the problems that King Abdulaziz dealt with, the Palestine issue was, unquestionably, the most disturbing. Howarth (1964: 223) stated that King Abdulaziz had always been adamant about the Arab rights to Palestine, and had always been liable to become enraged when Palestine was discussed. As leading Arab head of state of his time, he refused, from 1915 onwards, the several appeals made by British Governments to accept their plans to give the Zionists a national home in Palestine (Qal'aji, 1971:19; al-Musallam, 1985: 117; al-Shuhail, 1987: 181).

Ibn Saud was deeply moved by the plight of the Palestinians and alarmed by the increased immigration of Jews into Palestine, which had increased from 1928 and which was a primary cause of subsequent Arab revolts. King Abdulaziz was a figurehead for the aspirations of most Palestinian leaders and revolutionaries. They came or wrote to him seeking his support from the early years of the

Palestinian struggle,<sup>1</sup> among them the famous leader, Hajj Amin al-Husaini. The Palestinians considered King Abdulaziz to be the most popular and famous Arab leader, and he had the capability to provide them with political and financial support.<sup>2</sup> King Abdulaziz was one of the first Arab leaders to resist the British implementation of the Balfour Declaration. Al-'Ash'al (1986:135) stated that King Abdulaziz, due to Britain's insistence on putting the Balfour Declaration into practice, according to the Mandate policy, refused the frequent British invitations to join the League of Nations. He believed that if he became a member of the League of Nations, he would have been obliged to accept its policies.

On the Palestinian issue, King Abdulaziz's policy was based on two important pillars. The first was coordination and co-operation with Arab leaders and intellectuals in order to unite the Arab resistance against Zionist strategies.<sup>3</sup> The second pillar was his diplomatic and peaceful attempts to gain the support of influential powers, mainly Britain and the United States of America, in the Arab struggle, or at least to secure their neutrality. He endeavoured to convince Britain and the U.S. of the importance of Arab rights and tried with patience to change their position (Barry, 1981:16).

With regard to coordination and cooperation among the Arabs, Saudi Arabia participated in most of the conferences which were held to discuss the problem of Palestine. Saudi Arabia always co-operated with all the Arab countries which were sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinians (Howarth, 1964:223; al-Ghulami, 1980: 146; Harran, 1987: 14). Moreover, Howarth (1964: 223) argued that the only wish which all the Arabs shared was to throw the Jews out of Palestine as soon as the British Mandate ended. Indeed, Arabs and Muslims were

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.001 Ibn Saud/19, despatch from Mr. Brant at the American Consulate in Jerusalem, to the American Secretary of State, on 15 November 1936.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.001 Ibn Saud/19, despatch from Mr. Brant at the American Consulate in Jerusalem, to the American Secretary of State, on 15 November 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23274, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 12 February 1939.



discontented with granting the Jews a home in Palestine and enthusiastic to fight for Palestinian rights. Most of the Arab people saw that the restoration of Palestine by peaceful means was unlikely but, despite this, the Arab leaders did not prepare their people either politically or militarily for their decisive battle (al-Mareq, 1978:347-351; 'Ali, 1980: 102).

King Abdulaziz believed from the early years in peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the Palestinian problem. He called for negotiations with Britain, the power responsible for the creation of this problem (Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:100). He acknowledged that he was criticised by his people, the Arabs and the Muslims, for his diplomatic policy. However, he defended his strategy. He emphasised his belief in the credibility of Britain and the United States and their promises to solve this problem with the full cooperation of the Arabs (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1071-1076 and 1254-1257; Harran, 1999: 383).

Also, King Abdulaziz justified his policy by conceding that using military force against Britain would not enable the Arabs to liberate Palestine (al-Zirikli. 1977a: 1100; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999: 100). Furthermore, he believed that Britain would not leave the Jews to their fate if the Arabs tried to solve the problem militarily (Howarth, 1964: 224; al-Zirikli. 1977a: 1193 and 1256; al-Mareq, 1978: 385-386). For further justification, Zu'aitir (1980: 256) indicated that, in order to rationalize his policy, King Abdulaziz told the Arab High Committee<sup>1</sup> that before thinking of resisting Britain, the Arabs should create a strong linkage with another strong foreign power. To do otherwise would make resistance an unsafe adventure.

Many Arabs criticized their leaders, among them King Abdulaziz, for their attitude toward the Palestine issue and for adopting the apparently unsuccessful policy of peaceful diplomacy. Indeed, King Abdulaziz himself, during his

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<sup>1</sup> The Arab High Committee was formed in 1936, and consisted of the leaders of the Palestinian parties. It was headed by the famous Palestinian leader, Hajj Mohammad Amin al-Husaini.

meeting with the British Commissioner in Jeddah, Sir Reader Bullard, in 1938, acknowledged that under the pressure of public opinion, which resulted from the British policy in Palestine, he was unable to guarantee maintaining his friendly relations with Britain.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he acknowledged in several letters that the British policy in Palestine had made him the target of Arab and Muslim criticism for his peaceful policy with respect to Britain. He claimed that this had put him in a critical position. His friendship with Britain and his duty as a Muslim and Arab leader became increasingly incompatible (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1079-1091 and 1255; 'Attar, 1973: 137-140).

According to Harran (1999:403-405) and Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah (1999:236-290) it seemed that, during the second conference in London in 1946, King Abdulaziz believed that Britain would continue its support towards the Jews. He also believed that the UN was expected to vote on partitioning Palestine due to the great influence exerted on it by Britain and the United States. On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly declared its Resolution to partition Palestine into two states between the Arab and Jews. As a matter of fact, Britain abstained from voting on this Resolution. The Resolution was strongly rejected by King Abdulaziz and all the other Arab leaders. Britain announced the end of its Mandate in Palestine on 15 May 1948, one day after the declaration by the Zionists of the establishment of Israel. This paved the way for the first war between the Arab countries and the Jews, as King Abdulaziz had predicted.

King Abdulaziz had repeatedly declared that if Britain and the United States insisted on partitioning Palestine, this would ignite a war in the Middle East. Furthermore, he acknowledged on various occasions that it would honour him to die as a martyr for Palestine and stated that he would rather prefer to die and be deprived of his offspring and fortune than establish a homeland for the Zionists in Palestine. He argued that the establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23274, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 12 February 1939.

would be against the interests of the Arabs and would threaten their entity, not only in Palestine, but in all Arab states (Monroe, 1973: 37; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1100; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:99-100). The deterioration of the Palestine situation in 1947-1948 forced King Abdulaziz to change his political language and convinced him of the need for military action.

However, his perspective on the war was different from that of other Arab leaders. Most Arab leaders thought that they should use the Arab regular armies against the Jews after they had declared the establishment of their state of Israel on 14 May 1948, at the end of the British Mandate (Wahbah, 1960: 169-170; al-Mareq, 1978: 350; al-Saud, 1990: 65). There were protracted negotiations in the Arab League. King Abdulaziz's perception was that the Arab regular armies were not ready and not sufficiently trained for a real battle against an enemy with about 60,000-70,000 well trained and armed troops (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1291; 'Ali, 1980: 253). In addition, it was expected that foreign powers would intervene to protect the Jews if the Arab states attacked them. Also, he believed that the Palestinians themselves were capable of liberating their land from the Zionists and that this would deprive the foreign powers of the opportunity to intervene in Palestine (Howarth, 1964: 224; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1291; al-Saud, 1990: 65).

King Abdulaziz suggested that the Palestinians should announce their independent state, and that the Arab and Muslim countries should acknowledge this and support the Palestinians with volunteers and financial backing (Wahbah, 1960: 170; al-Mareq, 1978: 354; al-Saud, 1990: 65). This point of view was shared by some Egyptian parliamentary members. However, the Palestinians leader, Hajj Mohammad Amin al-Husaini, preferred that the fighting be restricted to the Palestinians, with the support of well-trained Arab military elements, in order to keep the Palestinian issue an internal affair. This, it was hoped, would prevent the foreign powers from intervening in support of the Zionists (al-Mareq, 1978: 376; al-Badri, 1987: 55-56; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999: 333-335). However, the attitude of King Abdulaziz was criticized by some of the Arab leaders and politicians, as they believed that he did not want King Abdullah of

Jordan to profit from this situation due to the old quarrel and competition between the two Royal Families. Al-Mareq (1978: 378-380) explained that this was the view of the Arab League as represented by its General Secretary, Abdulrahman 'Azzam.

However, King Abdulaziz called on the Arab League to present a united front and he agreed to send his troops to Palestine to participate in the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Another important reason which forced him and the other leaders, who shared his view, to take this position, was the massacres which were carried out by the Jewish armed elements against civilian Arabs, such as the Deir Yassin Massacre on 9 April 1948.<sup>1</sup> This massacre took place under the leadership of Begin, who later became an Israeli Prime Minister (Begin, 1951: 162). At that time, Begin was the leader of the radical Jewish organisation (Irgun). The Deir Yassin Massacre was seen, even by some Israeli historians, as a shameful episode in Jewish history (Kimche, 1953: 228). Hence, Arab leaders decided, through the Arab League, to intervene militarily in Palestine under pressure to preserve the remaining Arab lands and to secure the life of their people in Palestine.

The sequence of events of the War confirmed that King Abdulaziz's opinion was correct, for it demonstrated the Zionists' military superiority. A truce was arranged on 2 June 1948 ('Ali, 1980: 271-274; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999: 341-348). Al-Shathli (2003) has pointed out that the British air force fought against the Arabs and shot down five Egyptian aircraft while they were attacking the Zionists. He also claimed that the Zionists, as a result of the 1948 war, occupied a greater part of Palestine than they had been given by the UN decree.<sup>2</sup> Philby (1955:348) quoted President Nasser of Egypt, who said "*We ourselves are responsible for the loss of Palestine, and our leaders were the principal agents in losing it. We did nothing but make speeches and hold meetings. We used to say that we would throw the Jews into the sea, but we didn't do it*". Moreover, al-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.deiryassin.org/index1.html>.

<sup>2</sup> In *Shahid 'Ala al-'Asr Programme*, on al-Jazeera TV Channel.

Mareq (1978: 351-393), as one of the Saudi Arab soldiers who experienced the bitterness of the 1948 catastrophe, argued that the leaders of the neighbouring Arab countries used the Palestinian issue for their personal interests. In any way, Arab military intervention, through regular Arab armies led to disaster (Van der Meulen, 1999: 123).

Thus, it can be said that the British and United States policy in Palestine contributed to the catastrophe. Unsuccessfully, they attempted to reconcile the legitimate interests of the indigenous Palestinians with Zionist aspirations to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The British-American insistence on adopting these two commitments, which had never been reconcilable, was a major factor that contributed to the escalation of violence and conflict in the Holy Land. This will become clear in the following analysis of the second pillar of King Abdulaziz's policy: his attempt to restore Palestine through diplomatic channels and through his friendship with Britain and the United States of America.

### **5.1.2 Dealing with Britain as the Mandatory Power in Palestine**

The peace settlement after the First World War had left Britain the dominant power in the Middle East. In fact, the region was regarded by all other powers as a British sphere of influence (Bryson, 1977:115; Vassiliev, 1998:324). Moreover, Palestine was governed under a British Mandate in accordance with the League of Nations instructions. According to the Balfour Declaration, Britain was committed to establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, but it is said to have neglected its commitments, as a Mandate Power, to the Arabs, particularly the Arabs of Palestine, although the Arabs who supported the Arab revolt of 1916 were supporting the British position in the First World War (Williams, 1933: 122; Ghory, 1936: 686-692; Howarth, 1964: 107).

King Abdulaziz's position was one of absolute opposition to the British commitment to the Jews (al-Mukhtar, 1957:247; Howarth, 1964: 107; Qal'aji, 1971:19; al-Shuhail, 1987: 181). Al-Zirikli (1977a: 1073) stated that his rejection of British plans and refusal to agree that there was a special situation regarding the British Mandate in Palestine was a main reason behind the failure of Wadi al-'Aqeeq negotiations in 1926,<sup>1</sup> which preceded the Treaty of Jeddah. His view on this matter was well-known to Sir Gilbert Clayton when he came to Saudi Arabia to negotiate the Treaty of Jeddah with Ibn Saud in 1927. Clayton strongly recommended avoiding any discussion of British commitments to the Zionists with Ibn Saud, due to Britain's previous knowledge of Ibn Saud's outright rejection of ceding Palestine or any Islamic or Arab territory to the Zionists (Qal'aji, 1971:19; al-Musallam, 1985: 117; al-Saud, 2001:115; al-Ghulami, 1980:145). Winston Churchill (1959: 971) described King Abdulaziz as the most intransigent and obstinate of all the Arab allies over the Palestinian issue.

In 1936, the Palestinians embarked on a revolt in the form of a general strike. This was a result of the augmentation of Jewish emigration into Palestine during the 1920s, and also in opposition to the perceived Zionist plans to impose a Jewish state on their land. The Arab Higher Committee urged all Palestinians to refuse to pay taxes to the British Mandate Government as part of the protest. The strike lasted around six months and caused great hardship to the most vulnerable members of the Palestinian community. During the strike, Ibn Saud maintained contact with the British and consulted closely with Arab leaders in Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Yemen. In the end, responding to British appeals for help, Ibn Saud played a crucial role in persuading the Arab High Committee to end the strike in October 1936, with the promise of the British Government to send a Royal Commission to study the situation (Wahbah, 1960: 155; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1073-1076; Hallah, 1987:13-14; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:56-69).

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

The Royal Commission, known as the Peel Commission, concluded its work in August 1937, with the declaration that Palestine be partitioned between the Arabs and the Zionists. This proposal was strongly rejected by the Arabs with King Abdulaziz taking the lead. Moreover, as a result of this proposal, he told the British Commissioner in Jeddah, Sir Reader Bullard, that no honest Arab would agree to the partitioning of Palestine, and if there were an Arab leader in any Arab country who did agree, one could be sure that the majority of the people of that country would oppose him. Also, King Abdulaziz warned the British against any action which would provoke the Arabs (Philby, 1955: 336; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1077; al-Musallam, 1985: 119-122).

It might be said that King Abdulaziz's support for the Palestinians was limited to protest against the British plans and giving financial aid. Yet, his concern over the Palestine issue went far beyond that. He used his influence in Islamic and Arab circles, in addition to his good relations with Britain, to offer a suitable solution. During 1937, there was extensive correspondence with the British Government, including a memorandum submitted in September 1937, which featured a proposal of several points which he hoped the British Government would adopt. The most important point in this proposal was his suggestion that the British should declare a Palestinian constitutional government shared by the inhabitants of Palestine according to their percentage in that year under the condition of respecting this percentage by a limitation of the Jewish immigration (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1079-1088; al-Musallam, 1985: 117-121; Hallah, 1987:14-15).

With regard to the Palestinian issue, it could be said that good Saudi-British relations started to reap results. Furthermore, the British Government was gradually discovering that there were forces at work in Palestine over which it had no control. On 9 November 1938,<sup>1</sup> the British Government despatched an envoy to invite Ibn Saud to attend a conference in London to discuss the issue of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.one-state.org/historical/documents/mcdonald.htm>.

Palestine.<sup>1</sup> The British Colonial Secretary, Malcolm McDonald,<sup>2</sup> told the House of Commons that the British Government was in communication with the Governments of Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Trans-Jordan and Yemen in order to arrange a conference on Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Syria and Lebanon, within the French sphere of influence, were not to be invited, due to the British desire not to provoke France (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1113-1116; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:217-222).

In February 1939, Prince Faisal Ibn Abdulaziz led the Saudi Arabian delegation to the London Conference on Palestine, which was held from 7 February to 17 March. He brought with him a letter addressed to the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, from his father, Ibn Saud. The letter recalled the support which Ibn Saud had lent to British interests in the past and invited the British to state their policy on Palestine clearly. However, the conference failed to resolve any of the issues raised by the Palestinian situation for many reasons, among them the British exclusion of the Mufti of Jerusalem and the real leaders of the Palestinians from the conference, in addition to the escalation of violent incidents in Palestine<sup>4</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1117-1120; 'Ali, 1980: 21-54; al-Hallah, 1987:15). Furthermore, the attention of the British Government was quickly diverted to another hazardous matter. By September 1939, Germany had invaded Poland and Britain with France had declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

In February 1945, shortly after his meeting with President Roosevelt, Ibn Saud met the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in Egypt. Deplorably, Churchill declared that he was the original architect of the British policy to create a Jewish homeland in

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23274, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 12 February 1939.

<sup>2</sup> <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FRCMS%2041;recurse=1>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.one-state.org/historical/documents/mcdonald.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23274, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 12 February 1939.



Palestine. Moreover, Churchill attempted to use the positive relations that had existed between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Britain over many years to influence Ibn Saud's view on the issue of Palestine. He suggested that Ibn Saud should use his authority and influence to persuade the Arab world to accept the Zionist plans. Not surprisingly, Ibn Saud found Churchill's views entirely unacceptable and he tried to illustrate the real threat of supporting unlimited Zionist ambitions, which would harm Arab interests and the entire Middle East region, which, consequently, would be disastrous for British-Arab relations<sup>1</sup> (Wahbah; 1960: 159).

Holden and Johns (1981:134) argued that with World War Two nearly over, the conflict implicit in the original Balfour Declaration between the concept of a Jewish homeland and the rights of the existing Arab inhabitants of Palestine was approaching a climax. The Arabs, including King Abdulaziz, started to lose their patience, especially when in view of Britain's perceived support for the Zionists, as mentioned above.<sup>2</sup> This might be an important reason why King Abdulaziz worked to attract the Americans to the Middle East through commercial relations. As we have noted, he believed that the Arabs required another strong ally, as he told the Arab Higher Committee. Therefore, it was the British policy toward the Arabs which forced them to look for another source of support.

### **5.1.3 Ibn Saud's Attitude Towards the Zionist Activity**

King Abdulaziz's attitude towards the Zionists resulted from his early perception of their plans in the Arab lands. He stated this on several occasions. Ibn Saud told Dickson, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, in 1937 that he was sure that the Zionists' aspirations were to seize not only Palestine, but all the land down to al-Madinah, and to spread their control in the east as far as the Gulf coast (Dickson, 2002:412). As a result of the

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

King's opposition, the Zionists tried to reach agreement with him on several occasions. For example, Chaim Weizmann made a proposal that was communicated to Ibn Saud through Philby in 1940. Taking advantage of Ibn Saud's financial needs, the Zionist leaders offered him £20 million if he would change his attitude to the Palestine Question and settle all the Palestinian Arabs in his country (Philby, 1952: 213-214; Wahbah, 1960: 178-179). Given Ibn Saud's resolute stance, the Zionists continued their attempts through the Americans; Harold Hoskins, the delegate of President Roosevelt, met Ibn Saud in July 1943 and discussed the Palestinian issue with him. During this meeting Hoskins asked the King if he could meet Weizmann to discuss the Palestinian problem. The King refused to meet him due to his earlier attempt, through Philby, to bribe him. He described their attempt as a vile and criminal act ('Attar, 1972: 1266-1270; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1138-1143; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:115-117).

In politics nothing stays the same, yet the attitude of Ibn Saud against Zionism remained unchangeable to his death.<sup>1</sup> It is clearly important to discover the reason. In March 1943, Ibn Saud gave an interview to an American journalist called Noel E. Bush on the issue of Palestine. During this interview, he justified the reasons for his attitude and asked Bush to inform the American people. He stated that he could not see that the Jews had any justification for their claims in Palestine on the grounds that for centuries before the mission of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him), Palestine had been a Jewish land. The Romans had conquered the Jews, killing and scattering them so that no trace of their rule remained. The Arabs had conquered Palestine over 13 centuries ago, liberating it from the Romans, and since that time it had remained Muslim. The Jews therefore had no right to the country, because all the countries in the world had been conquered by people who had made undisputed homes in such lands. If we were to follow the Jewish theory, many of the settled people of the world would have to leave their homes. Secondly, he was not afraid either of the Jews or of their having a state or authority in Arab countries or anywhere else because of what God told us through the tongue of His Prophet in his Holy Book.<sup>2</sup> He saw that the Jews' insistence on a homeland in Palestine could not be maintained for the reason

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<sup>1</sup> Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan. In *'Idha'at Programme*, on al-'Arabiyyah TV Channel on 9 June 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *'Umm al-Qura Newspaper*, Issue No. 1080, 16 November 1945.

that it was unjust to the Arabs and the Muslims, and also because it only created friction between the Muslims and their friends, the Allies. If the Jews needed a place in which to live there were countries in Europe, America, and elsewhere that were larger, more fertile, and more convenient to their interests (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1131-1132).

King Abdulaziz officially presented his policy to the Zionists when he sent his Crown Prince, Saud, to meet President Truman in 1947. King Abdulaziz provided his son with general guidance, including his policy toward the Zionists and a justification for his attitude. He said *"We, the Arabs, are Muslims first of all. The Jews have been the enemies of our religion since the birth of Islam. At the same time, Islam does not share the principle of racism. We are not racists; we do not oppose the Jews just because they are Jews. However, we oppose the tyrannical policy preached by some Zionist Jews. The reasons for our opposition to that policy are numerous. Zionism is based on a tyrannical principle. Zionism claims hypocritically that it is based on the liberation of oppressed Jews. How can one get rid of oppression by oppressing others, or eliminate injustice by committing a greater injustice? Zionism contradicts the Arab countries' current political interests. It threatens them from the military and strategic viewpoint"* (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 776-777; Vassiliev, 1998: 342-343).

King Abdulaziz believed that opposing Zionism constituted real justice. He tried to explain that there was no use in confronting the Allies and the Muslims with a problem from which neither would profit. As for ancient Jewish history, the Jews had behaved in a deliberate way in order to provoke trouble and disturbances. Now they were harming the natives of Palestine, causing poverty and desolation which would be the source of persistent problems in Palestine and in the entire Middle East.

## 5.2 King Abdulaziz and the Question of Colonialism in Arab Countries

### 5.2.1 Relationship with Arab Political Leaders

Hakeem (1976:165) has argued that after conquering al-Hijaz and consolidating his authority over most of the Arabian Peninsula in one sovereign state, King Abdulaziz achieved the first unification of Arabia, which became the model for the Arabs and the object of their hopes.<sup>1</sup> This was due to the general circumstances in the Arab world, which were not suitable for any kind of Arab integration. During the King's reign, most of the Arab countries were controlled directly or indirectly by foreign powers, mainly by Britain and France as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement<sup>2</sup> of 1916, and according to the policy of the Mandate. The foreign policies and international relations of most of the Arab states at that time were therefore governed by those foreign powers; consequently, in order to establish his relationships with other Arab countries, King Abdulaziz was compelled to deal with the colonial powers which controlled those countries (al-Mukhtar, 1957:184-191; al-Shuhail, 1987:170-173; al- Mareq, 1978, 272; Harran, 1999: 373).

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, King Abdulaziz became one of the most influential Arab leaders. There were several reasons for his authority and prestige during those years, among them the recognition of his sovereignty by the powerful states through his treaties with them such as the Treaty of Jeddah in 1927 with Britain and the Treaty of al-Jazeera with France,<sup>3</sup> signed on 10 November 1931. Another important reason was his victory at the battle of al-Sibalah, which consolidated the internal

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.001 Ibn Saud/19, despatch from Mr. Brant at the American Consulate in Jerusalem, to the American Secretary of State, on 15 November 1936.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/sykes.htm>; <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1916/sykespicot.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp: 114-127.

stability of his state and the unity of his leadership. He was also victorious in the Saudi-Yemeni war of 1934, which led to the Treaty of al-Taif in the same year. Indeed, this Treaty and the Saudi-Iraqi-Yemeni Charter for Arab Brotherhood and Alliance, which was established on 1937,<sup>1</sup> constituted a great step forward in consolidating inter-Arabs solidarity. The King said that these two treaties laid a strong foundation for mutual support among the Arabs. Also, he expressed the wish that Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Syria would join in this Alliance (al-Musallam, N.D:21; al-Mukhtar, 1957:520-522; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 659). Certainly, King Abdulaziz was among the pioneering Arab leaders who called for Arab unity from his earliest years as a monarch.

Moreover, the Saudi-Iraqi-Yemeni Charter for Arab Brotherhood and Alliance was a result of the determination of King Abdulaziz and King Faisal of Iraq to achieve the consolidation of the Arab nation. They met together in 1930 to discuss many of the issues confronting the Arab world and agreed on solutions to most of the problems besetting relations between their two countries. In April 1931, in Makkah, Prince Faisal and Nouri al-Sa'ed signed an arbitration protocol, a treaty of friendship and good neighbourly relations and an agreement on the extradition of criminals<sup>2</sup> (Wahbah, 1960:119; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:265-266). Indeed, this policy of friendly relations agreed between King Abdulaziz and King Faisal, and continued by Faisal's son King Ghazi in 1933, was the main step leading to the Saudi-Iraqi Charter for Arab Brotherhood and Alliance, which resulted directly from the collaboration between King Abdulaziz and King Ghazi. This Charter, signed on 2 April 1936, provided for Saudi-Iraqi co-operation in many areas including cultural, diplomatic, security and military issues.<sup>3</sup> This achievement could therefore be considered the first step on the path leading to Arab solidarity.

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*, pp: 241-244; Public Record Office, FO 371/20056, despatch by Sir Archibald C. Kerr, the British Ambassador in Baghdad, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 8 April 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*, pp: 68-77.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*, pp: 220-224.

An important result of this Charter occurred almost immediately; only one month after it was signed, Saudi-Egyptian relations improved markedly after a long period of disagreement. It is true that this improvement came immediately after the death of King Fuad, who was hostile toward Ibn Saud for a long time, after the latter's conquest of al-Hijaz, but the general environment was conducive to this development. The two Governments signed a Treaty of Friendship on 7 May 1936.<sup>1</sup> According to this Treaty, the two states upgraded their diplomatic representation to legation level after a long period of Egyptian insistence on keeping it to only agency level (al-Musallam, N.D:21; al-Sumari et al., 1999:126).

It is worth noting here that the Saudi-Egyptian dispute had several causes. Among these was the al-Mahmal issue during the Hajj of 1926; it took some time for the two sides to settle this problem. Also, there was a personal disagreement between King Abdulaziz and King Fuad, which of course, led to the dispute between the two states. This dispute between the two Kings was centred on their different views concerning the Caliphate.<sup>2</sup> King Fuad aspired to be Caliph for the entire Islamic World and to this end he called for an Islamic conference, which was held in Cairo in May 1926. Ibn Saud did not send his representative and the conference refused to appoint King Fuad as Caliph due to his strong relations with the British (Wahbah, 1960:130-146; al-Tahiri, 1991:405).

The Treaty of 1936, however, ushered in a period of close Saudi-Egyptian relations and consolidated the joint policy of King Abdulaziz and Fuad's successor King Farooq. They exchanged official visits; King Farooq visited Saudi Arabia on 25 January 1945, and King Abdulaziz visited Egypt the following month. Also, King Abdulaziz visited Egypt for the second time on 6 January 1946 for twelve days. During those visits and as a result of the Kings' good relationship, the two

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*, pp. 225-233; Public Record Office, FO 371/20061, despatch by Sir Miles Lampson, the British High Commissioner and Ambassador in Cairo, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 12 May 1936.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890F.404/9, despatch from Mr. Childs, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 14 April 1936.

Governments adopted similar policies on several Arab issues during this period<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977b: 269-305; al-Sumari et al., 1999:27). They worked together for the creation of the Arab League according to their shared vision of the need for the unification of the Arab World,<sup>2</sup> and to bring about the independence of Syria and Lebanon as sovereign states, free from the influence of the Hashemite House.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars have argued that the Governments in Riyadh and Cairo supported the majority of the people in Syria and Lebanon, as a result of collaboration against the strategies of the Baghdad-Amman Axis (al-Tahiri, 1991:405-406; Harran, 1999:414-417).

There was a project for regional integration in Bilad al-Shaam, known as the Greater Syria, and also a plan for the integration of Iraq and Bilad al-Shaam, the region known as the Fertile Crescent, conceived by Nouri al-Sa'ed, the former Iraqi Prime Minister. This project was rejected by the Syrian nationalists. At the same time, King Abdulaziz saw that these projects and suggestions were likely to benefit the Hashemite House in Iraq and Jordan. He was also fearful that those kinds of narrow integrationist plans would only benefit individuals and personal interests rather than the Arab people as a whole, and that the plans, if realised, might constitute a real threat to his unified territories and the sovereignty of his country.<sup>4</sup> This increased King Abdulaziz's doubts concerning these proposals for regional integration (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1200-1207; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 190-193; Harran, 1999:433-437).

King Abdulaziz wished, through his Arab policy, to achieve all kinds of political, economic and cultural cooperation with the Arabs.<sup>5</sup> When the notion of Arab unity, or, more specifically of the Arab League, became clear, he included his recommendations in a message and sent it on 3 January 1945 to the General Arab

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45542, copy of "Le Journal d' Egypt" dated 1 February 1945.

<sup>2</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45237, despatch from Lord Killeam, the British Ambassador in Cairo, to the British Foreign Office on 23 March 1945.

<sup>4</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 2 January 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

Conference, which was organized in Alexandria in Egypt. He was concerned to establish an Arab organization to promote coordination and cooperation between its members, based on mutual respect and full acknowledgment of the sovereignty of all its member states. This view was shared and supported by the Egyptian Government, which worked to dispel Saudi reservations and persuaded the Saudi Government to sign the Charter of the Arab League<sup>1</sup> on 22 March 1945 ('Assah, 1971:128-131; al-Zirikli, 1977:1207-1209; al-Humoodi, 1998: 528-529; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 193-197; Harran, 1999:437-441).

Relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia remained warm until 1952, when the army took power in Egypt. The reason for this cooling of relations might have been the eagerness of the new Egyptian rulers to export their revolution to the other Arab countries. However, King Abdulaziz reacted to this upheaval with patience and calmness, believing that time would teach the young officers that relations between the two countries were a serious matter transcending personal differences and that they were based on mutual interests and inseparable religious and cultural bonds reflecting people-to-people rather than ruler-to-ruler ties (al-Tahiri, 1991:406).

During the Second World War, France promised to give Syria and Lebanon their independence, but it changed its policy and became more aggressive towards the Arabs, such as when the French Delegate-General, Jean Helleu, declared martial law, cancelled the Lebanese constitution and arrested the President together with most of the ministers and Members of Parliament in November 1943.<sup>2</sup> King Abdulaziz protested against this action to the Governments of the USA,<sup>3</sup> Britain and France

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/arableag.htm>; <http://www.muqatel.com/openshare/indexf.html>; Public Record Office, FO 731/45237, despatch from Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador in Cairo, to the British Foreign Office on 23 March 1945.

<sup>2</sup><http://home.iprimus.com.au/fidamelhem/ssnp/The%20battle%20for%20independence%20in%20Lebanon.htm>; <http://www.stmaron.org/marhst12.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/35162, report on the negotiations between Anthony Eden and Prince Faisal in London, dated 18 November 1943; Public Record Office, FO 371/40256, article on Prince Mansur's visit to Gaza in the "Palestine Post" 21 November 1943.



itself. Nevertheless, the savage French policy in Syria and Lebanon increased in intensity and became more brutal, exemplified by the bombing of some Syrian cities due to the augmentation of the Syrian rejection of the French Mandate. This led the King to increase his protests against the French actions to Britain and the United States of America, which finally prompted British military intervention with the support of America<sup>1</sup> (Harran, 1999: 412-414).

The attitude of King Abdulaziz toward Syria and Lebanon was very supportive from the beginning. He worked to keep them from being swallowed by the Hashemite throne, but his main aim at this time was to help them achieve their independence from France and secure for their people the right to self-determination (al-Zirikli, 1977a:805-806; al-Tahiri, 1991:410-411; al-Salloom, 1995:297). His position on this matter was indicated by his alleged response when in 1939 France was said to have offered to appoint one of Ibn Saud's sons, apparently Prince Faisal, as King of Syria; he agreed only on condition that it would help to liberate Syria and that Syria would be given at least as much freedom as Iraq<sup>2</sup> (Wahbah, 1960:49; Sa'ed, 1964:299).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia thus worked through its relations with France, Britain and the United States for the freedom of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> This was one of the important issues which King Abdulaziz discussed with President Roosevelt during their meeting on 14 February 1945 at Bitter Lakes (al-'Uqbi, 1984:162; al-Zirikli,

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

<sup>2</sup> This was stated by Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak, during my interview with him in Riyadh, on 17 January 2004; Also, this was confirmed by Lateefah al-Salloom, in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004; Public Record Office, FO 371/23276, despatch from Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 15 April 1939; Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939; Public Record Office, FO 406/77, cipher telegram by Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, to Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, on 6 October 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45616, cipher telegram from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 9 February 1945.

1977a: 1178). After this meeting, the King met al-Quwwatli, the first President of independent Syria, the day before his meeting with Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, on 17 February 1945, in al-Fayyum in Egypt<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1184). Also, during the UN's first conference held in 1945 in San Francisco, the King, through his representative Prince Faisal, demanded the independence of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> This demand was a factor influencing the participant members to adopt the right to self-determination and independence for all the establishing members, and this led to the drafting of Article 78 of the UN Charter, which stated that *"The trusteeship system shall not apply to territories which have become Members of the United Nations, relationship among which shall be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality"*.<sup>3</sup> On 7 April 1946, the French forces evacuated Lebanon and Syria, and both became independent states (al-Tahiri, 1991:410; Harran, 1999:414).

The relations of King Abdulaziz with Syria and Lebanon continued through a new policy designed to maintain their sovereignties as republics against some nationalist movements and military coups which would have served the Hashemite house and British policy through unification with Iraq or Jordan. It was clear that in this period Syria became an arena for two contradictory policies. Ibn Saud's policy was opposed by those of the British and the Hashemite House, and it was put into practice by supporting the movement of Husni al-Za'eem in March 1949. This movement was eradicated by Sami al-Hinnawi's coup in August 1949. Al-Hinnawi's plan was to rekindle the hope of integration between Iraq and Bilad al-Shaam to form a unified Fertile Crescent, which led to a new confrontation with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Both these states welcomed the coup of Adeb al-Shishakli in December 1950 and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia implemented a new policy towards Syria by giving financial support amounting to six million dollars through the Trade Agreement of

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45542, despatch from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office, on 10 February 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart.htm#art78>.

1950<sup>1</sup> (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 284-287; Harran, 1999: 414-418). Indeed, this policy helped the new regime to survive until another coup took place in 1954, after the death of the King.

It can be noticed that the Hashemite-Saudi relationship was the main concern of King Abdulaziz's Arab Policy. Relations with King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan, however, were somewhat different from those with his brother King Faisal. It is true that in November 1925, Ibn Saud had signed the Treaty of Haddah with Trans-Jordan, but the disputes between them continued due to the hatred of King Abdullah for Ibn Saud (Lewis, 1933: 521-532; Wahbah, 1960:129-130; al- Mareq, 1978, 296). From 1930 to 1932 the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Trans-Jordan escalated, due to many cross-border tribal raids conducted by both sides, which led them finally to ask Britain to arbitrate between them. In addition, the attitude of King Abdullah toward King Abdulaziz became clearer when the former supported Ibn Rifadah during his revolt against Ibn Saud in 1932 (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1367; al-Sabbagh, 1999:162-163).

However, as a result of the peaceful relations between Ibn Saud and the Hashemite throne in Iraq, relations with the other Hashemite house in Jordan improved after a long period of political disputes between King Abdulaziz and King Abdullah of Jordan. The two royal families adopted a new policy which culminated in the signing of an arbitration protocol and a Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighbourly Relations on 27 July 1933,<sup>2</sup> thus the protracted enmity between the two states ended in peace (Wahbah, 1960:129; al-Sabbagh, 1999:105-169). On 29 June 1948, King Abdullah visited King Abdulaziz in Riyadh. Both heads of state expressed their satisfaction with this visit, indicating to some observers that a new era of mutual trust, cooperation and coordination between the two states had begun. This was indeed the case, especially since this period saw the emergence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They both declared their strong support for the Arab League with regard to the Palestinian issue and various Arab affairs. Also, after that visit the two states exchanged

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951, pp: 331-337.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951, pp: 131-148.

diplomatic representation. Moreover, King Talal, who succeeded his father King Abdullah after his assassination in July 1951, continued his good relations with Ibn Saud and visited Saudi Arabia in November 1951 (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1367-1374). It seems probably that the two states felt the need for increased cooperation and mutual support due to the new threat to the Arabs in Palestine.

### **5.2.2 Ibn Saud, the Arab National Liberation Movements and Colonial Powers**

Wahbah (1960:171) called King Abdulaziz the father of the leaders of the struggle for Arab liberation and described Riyadh as their object of hope. Moreover, al-Mareq (1978: 272-286) noted that the leaders of the Arab political and military liberation movements turned to King Abdulaziz to support them in their resistance and indeed to save their lives when they were driven from their countries by the pressure of the colonial powers and found themselves refugees in Saudi Arabia. This was when most of the Arab countries were under foreign occupation, such as the French Mandates in Syria and Lebanon, and the French occupation of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the British Mandate in Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine, and the Italian occupation of Libya. Al-Mareq named many of the leaders and political revolutionaries from all over the Arab World who sought refuge in Saudi Arabia and found support from King Abdulaziz.

It is, however, important to investigate the reasons behind King Abdulaziz's attitude toward these leaders, since this was at a time when such an attitude would have brought about confrontation with powerful states such as France, Britain and Italy. Also, Saudi Arabia at that time faced the pressure of a shortage of economic resources, which forced King Abdulaziz to ask for a loan from Britain, France and the United States of America<sup>1</sup> (Williams, 1933: 250; Holden and Johns, 1981:114-118).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, 371/45523, despatch from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 February 1945; American Archives, 890 F. 51/12, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American

However, his attitude and policy toward current Arab issues were shaped by many factors, among them was his strong feeling of responsibility as a Muslim and Arab leader (Wahbah, 1960:171; al- Shuhail, 1987:181). Piscatori (1983a: 33) argued that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acknowledged on various occasions that the first principle of its foreign policy was Islamic solidarity, and the second was Arab unity.

Some writers have pointed out that Ibn Saud perceived his success to have derived from his faith in Islam and his determination to maintain and build on the Arab traditions of the region. It was a unique combination of faith and respect for traditions (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983: 156-159). Ibn Turki (2003:13) stated that *"The governing regime in Saudi Arabia was based on Arabic traditions, and the political system in the Kingdom was not imported from Russia or America or any other state in the world"*. He also added that *"The Saudi Political regime emerged from the reality of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its traditions and heritage. It is a truly local regime which could engage in development without losing its essential merits"*.

It can be said, then, that one of the basic reasons behind the King's attitude toward the Arabs was his strong belief in the value of Islamic and good Arab traditions and his sense of responsibility as a role model for the Arabs. Al-Saud (1990:88) stated that King Abdulaziz described himself to be an Arab man believing in Arab traditions and complying with them even before being a King, which required that he had to be a moral symbol for the Arab people. This helps to explain why he acted on many occasions in accordance with his Islamic belief and Arab traditions, although he knew that he would pay for his stance politically. This tradition entailed the protection of refugees, even non-Arabs and non-Muslims (Philby, 1955: 337). For example, he refused to hand over Rasheed al-Kailani to the British and Iraqi Governments when

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Secretary of State, on 1 August 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 51/13, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 28 August 1933; American Archives, 890F. 51/14, despatch from Mr. Salter, in the American Consulate in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 14 November 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 0011/12, despatch from W. N. Walmsley Jr, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 3 August 1932.

he fled to Saudi Arabia in October 1945 after the suppression of his revolt against the British Mandate in Iraq in 1941, which led the British and Iraqis to issue a capital sentence against him<sup>1</sup> (Rida, 1950: 38-39; Philby, 1955: 337; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1213-1220; al-Saud, 1990:87-90).

Moreover, King Abdulaziz insistently refused to deliver one of the revolutionaries against the French Mandate to the French Government for execution. This refugee was Fawzi al-Qawuqji, who later became the Chief of the Saudi Army (al-Mareq, 1978:274-286). Surprisingly, he forced the French to accept Rashad Fir'un, who had been one of the revolutionaries struggling against their rule, as the Saudi Ambassador in Paris. When the French Government insisted that another be appointed instead of Rashad, Ibn Saud answered that they must accept Rashad or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would not send any ambassador ( *ibid*: 48-52). It is worth noting here that most of his advisors and ambassadors were revolutionaries against the foreign occupying powers in their home states; most of them turned to King Abdulaziz for support, and he welcomed them and treated them as Saudis.

Moreover, due to his respect for Arab customs, King Abdulaziz was willing to excuse those who acted in accordance with Arab traditions. For example, he quit asking the Iraqi Government to hand over 'Uqab Ibn 'Ijil, from the tribe of Shammar, who was one of his followers who had rebelled against him and sought asylum with his cousin, 'Aqeel al-Yawar in Iraq. When al-Yawar asked Ibn Saud whether he would extradite Ibn 'Ijil, if he was in his position, this question was enough to persuade Ibn Saud to forget the issue and respect al-Yawar's attitude (al-Mareq, 1978:13-22; al-Saud, 1990:84-87).

However, King Abdulaziz's support for the Arabs was not limited to those who resorted to him for aid. Indeed, he had assisted all the Arab leaders who asked for his support while they were struggling for the independence of their countries all over the

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

Arab world. This was confirmed by the opinion of Sharif Faisal, later King Faisal of Iraq, although he was a rival of King Abdulaziz. When France occupied Syria and Lebanon under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Sharif Faisal led the Syrian resistance, but he was defeated in 1920. It has been alleged that he said to some of his followers *"I will go to London to try to achieve Syrian independence; if I fail in my mission the only way for all of us is Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud is the only one who is able to unify the Arab countries and consolidate their independence"* (al-Zirikli, 1977a:736; Abu Zlam, 1984:553).

Moreover, Al-Mareq (1978: 278) cited al-Qawuqji, a fighter for Syrian independence, who said *"King Abdulaziz's support was not restricted to the Syrian revolutionaries, but he supported all Arab fighters who fought for their freedom in Palestine, Iraq, al-Maghrib al-'Arabi and all the Arab countries"*. Al-Qawuqji also named some of those resistance fighters who obtained assistance from King Abdulaziz, such as Sultan Basha al-'Atrash, Prince 'Adil Arsalan, Nabeeh Bik al-'Adhmih, Mohammad 'Ali al-Shawwaf and 'Adil Bik al-'Adhmih. Furthermore, al-Salloom (1995:290-291) has noted that Ibn Saud contacted the Arab movements in the Arab Maghrib through some of his counsellors, including Basheer al-Sa'dawi and Khalid al-Ghargani, who both secured Ibn Saud's assistance toward the independence of Libya from the Italian occupation. With regard to the Algerian struggle, Algerian leaders such as Basheer al-'Ibrahimi, Abdul Hameed Ibn Badees, al-Tayyib al-'Uqbi and Ma'ali al-Haj contacted Ibn Saud very early and obtained his sympathy and support for the cause of the liberation of Algeria from French colonialism.

Also, the leaders of the Tunisian liberation movement contacted King Abdulaziz seeking his support for their guerrilla war against the French occupation. Al-Mareq (1978:309-310) and al-Saud (1990:139-141) remarked that Mohammad al-Masmudi revealed that he and Habib Bourgiba both met King Abdulaziz to explain their need for his assistance regarding the independence of Tunisia. When the King asked them what he could do for them, unfalteringly Bourgiba said that they were determined to fight their enemy and had come to ask for his support. Immediately, Ibn Saud

responded to their requests and provided them with money which they used for buying armaments to fight the French.

It can be seen that one of the main reasons behind the King's policy toward the Arab liberation movements was his attitude toward colonialism in general. He did not accept the policies of the Mandate and occupation, and rejected all the agreements which emerged as a result of them from the beginning. Moreover, some historians have argued that Ibn Saud refused to join the League of Nations as result of its adoption of the Mandate policy,<sup>1</sup> which led to the placing of most of the world's countries, among them most of the Arab states, under the control of the European Powers such as Britain, France, Spain and Italy<sup>2</sup> (Al-Qaba', 1980:36; al-Salloom, 1995: 293). However, al-Sumari et al., (1999: 179-186) pointed out that the King, acting with uncharacteristic indecision, tried to join the League of Nations under the threat of the Italian activity in the southern part of the Red Sea.<sup>3</sup> But he finally decided not to join due to his old opinion regarding the policy of Mandate and also as a result of the repeated failures of the League of Nations to protect small countries, which became clear after Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1936-1937. The British Commissioner in Jeddah, Sir Reader Bullard, stated that King Abdulaziz's desire to join the League of Nations ceased completely in 1937 (ibid: 186).

However, King Abdulaziz's attitude toward the colonial powers, mainly Britain, France and Italy and their interests in the Middle East which might threaten his political independence, and his hatred of the Mandate policy, seem to have been the main reason underpinning his desire to develop wide international relations with those international powers which had no colonial interests in the Arab World. The early 1930s witnessed various Saudi diplomatic initiatives toward the United States of

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah, on 31 December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/20843, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 28 February 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 406/77, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 29 January 1939.



America, the Soviet Union and Germany. These were put into effect through several official visits conducted by the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal and also through commercial agreements and the granting of oil concessions (Piscatori, 1983: 34-36; Harran, 1999: 371).

This new policy of King Abdulaziz succeeded in bringing in new competitors, which ended the monopolistic position of previous powers in the region, such as Britain and France. Moreover, the King's new foreign policy, in addition to maintaining his good relations with old friends, created a political balance and greater stability in the area. This helped him to secure the sovereignty of his state, which in turn allowed him to support the colonised Arab states in their struggle for independence. The King's foreign policy successfully enabled him to play a remarkable role in all matters of importance to the Arab World. In general, it can be said that by the end of his reign, King Abdulaziz had developed intimate relations with Egypt, the neighbouring states in the Gulf, the Yemenis in the south, the Hashemite thrones in the north, Syria and Lebanon, and with Arab liberation movements in North Africa. He sought a countervailing force in the Arab world which would bring about independence and unification. Also, he built strong relations with the international powers which exercised their political, economic or even military influence over the Arab World and used these relations for the benefit of all the Arabs.

### **5.3 King Abdulaziz's Approach to Inter-Arab Relations: a Conclusion**

The Arab states' political, economical and territorial interests inevitably gave rise to competitions between them. However, the Saudi-Hashemite rivalry was remarkable

and centuries old;<sup>1</sup> it started in the early years of the establishment of the first Saudi State (Niblock, 1982: 12; Vassiliev, 1998:100-104). In the modern era, when Sharif Husain proclaimed himself the King of the Arabs and Caliph of Muslims, his action was rejected by Ibn Saud (Vassiliev, 1998:261; Alangari, 1998:128-141; Howarth, 1964:141). King Abdulaziz described the Hashemites as his political opponents. In his guidance to his son Prince Saud during his official visit to United States in 1947, he acknowledged that there were some political disputes with Britain due to its unfriendly policy of supporting the Hashemites and other political opponents against him (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 775).

On several occasions the relationships between Saudi Arabia and some other Arab states deteriorated, such as that between King Abdulaziz and Salim al-Sabah, due to the personal hatred between them, which led to several military clashes. Kuwaiti-Saudi relations recovered after Salim's death because his successor Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah enjoyed a close friendship with Ibn Saud. Saudi-Egyptian relations were acrimonious during King Fuad's reign because he resented King Abdulaziz's conquest of al-Hijaz, and also because Ibn Saud refused to acknowledge him as Caliph. When Amin al-Rayhani asked King Abdulaziz about Arab unification, he frankly admitted "*We know ourselves and we cannot accept the leadership of others*" (Armstrong, 1934:231; al-Shuhail, 1987: 180).

However, the personal hostility shown towards Ibn Saud by some of his neighbours, such as the Hashemites and King Fuad, became particularly clear when they both supported Ibn Rifadah's movement in northern Saudi Arabia, in 1932. This took place concurrently with Imam Yahia's support for the Idreesi in the south, which threatened Ibn Saud's sovereignty. This forced Ibn Saud to adopt a policy that might be described as pre-emptive self-defence, as when he supported Syria and Lebanon in their struggle to be independent states. Of course, his concern to secure the stability and sovereignty of his state was a major reason for his policy against the Hashemite

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<sup>1</sup>New York Post, Friday, 30 April 1948, "*Ibn Saud's Star Wanes*";

<http://www.varchive.org/obs/480430.htm>.

ambitions of the Greater Syria and Fertile Crescent. Also, his belief in the Syrians' right to self-determination was an essential reason for his policy. This was demonstrated when he expressed his reaction to the French Government concerning the appointment of one of his sons as a monarch in Syria.

It should be remembered here that King Abdulaziz's authority was threatened by several boundary disputes, such as his dispute with Kuwait in the early 1920s, the Saudi-Yemeni War in 1934 and the al-Buraimi dispute, which was with Britain. Some might ask if those could have been avoided. Unfortunately, in the absence of any Arab organisation, capable of mediating between them, such clashes were inevitable. It is not surprising, therefore, that King Abdulaziz was eager to establish the Arab League in 1945, which would be based on full respect for the sovereignty of its members, mutual support and co-operation. He strongly opposed intervention in the internal affairs of other Arab states and remained very committed to this policy. He stated that: *"If any Arab state gave itself the right to intervene in the internal affairs of another Arab state during any emergence of any problem in that state, then many tribulations would follow"* (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 806).

## **Chapter Six: King Abdulaziz and Islamic Affairs**

### **6.1 King Abdulaziz's Vision of the Islamic Identity of Saudi Arabia**

In Saudi Arabia, the pattern of religious and political orientation has been in place since the alliance between Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab and Mohammad Ibn Saud in 1744. Over two hundred years of mutual support have wedded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Islam. This has been reinforced by the application of Islamic law and the promoting of the welfare of the Islamic state. Despite the extent and degree of the changes that characterise the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Islamic values have remained intact and have been central to Saudi political affairs. The symbiosis between political power and leadership, represented by the House of Saud, and the religion of Islam, represented by the 'Ulama, continues to this day in Saudi Arabia, providing a motivational nexus which has led to the consolidation of the legitimacy of the Saudi regime (al-Rayhani, 1988:40-43; Kechichian, 1986: 53-57; Piscatori, 1983: 56-57; Dekmejian, 1994:627).

Some scholars argue that King Abdulaziz, while attempting to consolidate his authority when building the third Saudi state, found a conceptual framework which would be crucial for the establishment of his rule. He would be granted legitimacy as long as he championed the cause of the religious specialists, becoming the guardian of ritualistic Islam. His legitimacy sprang from the recognition and enforcement of Islamic law, a law above his authority and independent of his will. As long as he allowed himself to be governed by this law, the way it was interpreted by the 'Ulama of Islam, he would be able to rule. Such concepts of authority and power were crucial for promoting ambitious leadership (al-Rasheed, 2002: 51).

The Islamic identity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is clearly recognisable in its policies regarding external affairs, as well as in the internal setting. King Abdulaziz himself announced that Islamic Law (Shari'ah) was the constitution of his state<sup>1</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983: 277). In point of fact, the importance of following the commands of Islam is something which most Saudis believe in. All their rules, attitudes and policies, including Saudi foreign policy, should emerge from an Islamic framework and be in accordance with Islamic instructions<sup>2</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 353-354; al-Muzayyan, 1997: 9; Van der Meulen, 1999: 143). Therefore, it can be said that the political affairs of the Saudis were and are based on the teachings of Islam. Kechichian (1986: 63) stated that from Turki Ibn Abdullah in 1843, who warned his governors that they should always remember that it was Islam which united the Arabian Peninsula and that they should adhere to its instructions, to the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which embarked on an unprecedentedly rapid process of modernization, it is safe to state that Islam continues to affect politics in a similar fashion.

In fact, this perspective is not exclusive to the Saudis, but is shared by most Muslims. Indeed, the political life of Muslims has been strongly influenced by Islam because most issues of significance such as personal faith, theological doctrine, cultural attitudes, and patterns of everyday behaviour inevitably shape Muslims' political values, since these matters are equally important parts of the Islamic faith as understood by its devotees. As a consequence, Islam underlies the politics of all Muslims, certainly including the Saudis, whether their political view are explicitly based on theological beliefs and ethical values, as in most cases, or, sometimes, on cultural and societal roles, or a combination of both (Humphreys, 1979: 2; Kechichian, 1986: 63).

With regard to the Islamic identity of Saudi Arabian foreign policy, the monarchs of Saudi Arabia acknowledged, on various occasions, that the first principle of Saudi

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 47.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 142, 2 September 1927.

foreign policy was to support various Islamic issues and Islamic solidarity, and then Arab unity, as a second principle (Piscatori, 1983:33). Nakhleh (1975: 51) stated that the defence of Islam was one of the important factors, on which Saudi foreign policy has been based. Furthermore, Piscatori (1983:33) cited Sir John Wilton, as saying that Islam has been a longstanding feature of Saudi foreign policy. In fact, the Islamic identity of Saudi Arabia was adopted from the earliest years of King Abdulaziz's monarchy, and there can be no doubt that King Abdulaziz, as a person, was a very religious man (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 178-179).

King Abdulaziz was a sincere adherent of the original Islamic guidance, as from an early age he understood it to be based on the pure instruction of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Most of the people of Najd, including the Al Saud family, followed the creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, which was renewed and propounded by Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab (Armstrong, 1934: 20-21; al-Mukhtar, 1957: 14; Holden and Johns, 1981: 21-22; Van der Meulen, 1999: 16). Consequently, King Abdulaziz was well known for the piety, faithfulness and strongly ethical behaviour, which sprang from his faith, and that marked his dealings with his state affairs (Benoist-Mechin, 1965:178-179; Almana, 1980:229-231; al-Muzayyan, 1997: 14; al-Rasheed, 2002: 62).

King Abdulaziz's intense belief in Islam was emphasized by the British Political Agent in Kuwait, Captain William Shakespear, who was known as one of the first Westerners who came to know Ibn Saud and admired him. Shakespear perceptively grasped, as early as 1915, that Ibn Saud was animated by a deep veneration and an absolute respect for Islam, and was motivated by a single-minded desire to do his best for his people by obtaining stable peace and security for them (Piscatori, 1983: 33). Due to his strong belief, King Abdulaziz dedicated himself and his state to the preservation and propagation of pure Islam, as propounded by the great reformers, Mohammad Ibn Saud and Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab (Holden and Johns, 1981: 21-22; Van der Meulen, 1999: 143-144).

Some writers about King Abdulaziz went further, pointing out that Ibn Saud, strengthened by his trust in God, was inspired by a driving belief that he had been entrusted by God with a mission to unite his people into one nation, lead them back to the greatness of their Muslim ancestors and make the Word of God Supreme (Armstrong, 1934: 291-292; Van der Meulen, 1999:15-16). Likewise, Benoist-Mechin (1965:179) noted that Ibn Saud left the British Agent, Sir Percy Cox, in no doubt that he was a Muslim first and an Arab second, but he would always consider himself the servant of God.<sup>1</sup> King Abdulaziz said, on several occasions that, "*I am a preacher, calling people to the religion of Islam and for its propagation among the nations*"<sup>2</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:183; Harran, 1999: 447).

Several historians have argued that King Abdulaziz undertook his long mission and re-established the dominion of his dynasty, impelled by his strong devotion to Islam and his desire to reunite the Arabian Peninsula in order to reform, renew and spread the Islamic doctrines according to Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings; this was one of his key objectives (Armstrong, 1934: 291-292; Abu Zlam, 1984:233; al-Shuhail, 1987: 18; al-Salloom, 1995: 13; Van der Meulen, 1999:15-16). Goldberg (1986: 185) cited Hamilton, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, who remarked "*Ibn Saud was motivated by dreams of restoration of the ephemeral Wahhabi Empire.*"

However, other historians did not agree with this concept. Lewis (1933: 518), Helms (1981: 172), and Piscatori (1983b: 58-59) insisted that King Abdulaziz's main target was the re-establishment of his ancestors' dominion. They claimed that King Abdulaziz found that the best way to restore his family's power was to convince his followers that his main motivation was to establish an Islamic state. Therefore, he strengthened his links to a vision of a pure version of Islamic guidance by renewing Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings and encouraging his people to adopt them. Piscatori (1983b: 59) claimed, "*It is obvious that he and his successors have used Islam to legitimate their positions and policies, and indeed, their very right to govern as a*

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 434, 16 April 1935.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 434, 16 April 1935.

*royal family.*" According to this view, Ibn Saud used the religious beliefs of his followers to help him forge a weapon with which to realise his political ambitions (ibid: 58).

This view was shared by other writers. Helms (1981: 172) seems to take the view that Ibn Saud was merely using Islam to further his own political ambitions: "*Under Abdulaziz's instructions the Wahhabi movement continued to be encouraged and used as a political tool*". Lewis (1933: 518) insisted that the guiding motive of King Abdulaziz's brilliant campaign was not to spread the light of Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings, but to regain the land of his forefathers and the fact that his conquests led to the founding of the current Wahhabi Empire was but incidental. Lewis (ibid) also said it could be argued with force that the subsequent policy of Ibn Saud afforded strong corroboration of the contention that his motives were political rather than religious. Goldberg (1986: 185) quoted Keyes, who argued that "*Ibn Saud was driven by a sense of patriotism, which with him is entirely dynastic*". Shakespear, the British Agent in Kuwait wrote in 1915 that Ibn Saud was enthused, first, by intense patriotism for his country and then by a profound veneration for his religion (Piscatori, 1983: 33; Goldberg, 1986: 185).

With regard to this debate, it can be said that, as a result of the old and continuing coalition between the religious-ideological (Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings) and the political leadership (Al Saud dynasty), there was no real conflict between establishing the Saudi state, in order to reform and expand what was understood to be pure Islam, and adopting and practising what was considered as original Islam, and re-establishing the Saudi state. Thus, King Abdulaziz served his religion, his people and his state. Benoist-Mechin (1965:179-180) argued that the religious and political actions of King Abdulaziz were combined together to the degree that the King himself could not distinguish between them.<sup>1</sup> He added that the expansion of Ibn Saud's authority and the propagation of his religion were one thing and each of them

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<sup>1</sup> Lateefah al-Salloom, in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004, endorsed this idea.



supported the other.<sup>1</sup> This was the source of King Abdulaziz's actual power (ibid: 180).

It is evident that, the Islamic image of King Abdulaziz and his state was indisputable. Therefore, in his foreign policy, especially with non-Muslim countries, King Abdulaziz always acted according to his Islamic beliefs and also because he wished to satisfy the devout and conservative 'Ulama and Ikhwan. As a Muslim, he felt it was his duty not to break his treaties and promises. Thus he insisted on staying neutral during the First World War, in order to keep the balance between his two treaties with the Turks and the British. Despite the Treaty of Darin in 1915, which stated that he agreed to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement or treaty with any foreign nation or power, he was never influenced in his policies by any motive so nebulous as loyalty to Britain; his loyalty was to himself, his creed and his people (Howarth, 1964: 199; Van der Meulen, 1999: 123).

King Abdulaziz attempted to strengthen and consolidate his Islamic identity, especially after he conquered the Two Holy Cities of Makkah and al-Madinah, by convening the Muslim World Conference, which was held in Makkah in 1926, and announcing that he would guarantee the neutrality and inviolability of the Holy Places in al-Hijaz. He also stated that he would not accept the presence of any foreign powers on his territories. By doing so, King Abdulaziz attempted to secure international Islamic approval of his full control of al-Hijaz. Moreover, he took advantage of his new position to maintain his Islamic stance and eliminate the restrictions of the Darin Treaty. He also sought, as far as he could, to dictate the terms of the new Anglo-Saudi Treaty of Jeddah of 1927, which, unlike the old treaty, acknowledged the complete and absolute independence of King Abdulaziz's dominions, and thus made clear that he was not the subordinate of an "infidel" power in the eyes of his own conservative followers, or in the eyes of Muslims around the world (Benoist-Mechin, 1965:177-191; Piscatori, 1986: 70-71).

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<sup>1</sup> Lateefah al-Salloom, in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004, endorsed this idea.

As a result of Ibn Saud's successful foreign policy, in addition to his strong commitment to the principles of Islam, the scholars of Najd (al-'Ulama) confirmed, during the great assembly in 1928 in Riyadh, which discussed Ibn Saud's dispute with rebellious Ikhwan, that they had never observed Ibn Saud display any weakness or indifference in his support for Islam. They also swore by God that they had never seen him commit any deed contrary to the rules of Islam, and this consolidated his legitimacy among his followers and most of the world's Muslims. This trust enabled him to act with more freedom and helped him to overcome many problems in both the internal and external arenas (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 483; al-Zamil, 1972: 255).

Some writers have claimed that there was a shift in the foreign policy of the modern Saudi state as a result of the conquest of al-Hijaz. They alleged that, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a change, if not a reversal, took place in King Abdulaziz's attitude towards Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings, when it became apparent that the King was no longer expanding territorially, one of the factors that caused the dispute with the Ikhwan. This new perception was reflected in the gradual disappearance of the term "Wahhabi" and its replacement by "Saudi" to designate the state, its ruler and its policies, and was confirmed by the new name of the "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", introduced in 1932<sup>1</sup> (Goldberg, 1986: 3 and 185-186; Van der Meulen, 1999: 144-145).

However, Goldberg (1986: 188) among others, admitted that the modern Saudi state remained, in both theory and practice, officially dedicated to the preservation of a "pure" Islam as propounded by Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahhab. But the propagation of Ibn Abdulwahhab's instruction was another matter. Not only was Saudi Arabia no longer dedicated, in practice, to the propagation of the Wahhabi doctrine but even the theory was restrained in the twentieth century (ibid). To some extent, this was the case. King Abdulaziz's attitude towards Ibn Abdulwahhab's teachings was clear from the outset. When he received the 'Ulama of al-Hijaz in

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<sup>1</sup> This was completely rejected by Lateefah al-Salloom in an interview with her in Riyadh on 11 January 2004.

1924, he declared that he would abide by the judgments of Ibn Abdulwahhab and others as long as they were demonstrably in accordance with the Koran and the guidance of the Prophet's Sunnah<sup>1</sup> (al-Zamil, 1972:152; al-Zirikli, 1977b: 216; al-Rayhani, 1988: 374-375; al-Azmeh, 1993: 153-154).

Van der Meulen (1999: 15) strongly argued that although King Abdulaziz had accomplished many reforms for his people in Arabia, his new foreign policy missed the opportunity to accomplish more in the Islamic arena. Through this policy, the King secured his newly-emerging state, but missed the chance to present a Saudi-Islamic solution to the problems besetting Muslims in the region (ibid: 145). In addition, Van der Meulen (1999: 19) claimed that King Abdulaziz restricted his mission to reforming the Arabian Peninsula only; he was not ambitious to reform outside its borders or to be a reformer for the entire Islamic world, which influenced King Abdulaziz's future more than once. In fact, attaining the objective of reforming the Islamic World, however, was beyond the ability of King Abdulaziz and his followers in the modern era.<sup>2</sup>

A Wahhabi state along the lines of the first two Saudi states could not have survived for long in modern times. King Abdulaziz's new policy was prompted by the trauma of the difficult lesson of the destruction of the former Saudi states. He understood that he could not enjoy complete freedom of action. The change that Ibn Saud undertook was a transformation in foreign policy. With uncontrolled expansion as its foundation, and without cohesive force, such a state was bound to be checked and even crushed. Ibn Saud had the insight to grasp this reality and thus secure the survival of the state. He believed that if his actions affected the interests of the powers around him, this might cause them to react against him and protect what they perceived as important interests (Goldberg, 1986: 171 and 188; Harran, 1999:366-367).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 142, 2 September 1927, and, Issue No. 1132, 8 November 1946; Al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 48.

<sup>2</sup> This view, which advocated by the present author, was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003.

King Abdulaziz's policy led to his state being secured, which enabled him to establish a strong position for himself in the international arena. From this strong position, with his firm commitment to Islam, King Abdulaziz was able to serve Muslim affairs better. It was clear that the King's policy towards Islamic affairs was based on his strong belief in the influence of Islam in the life of all Muslims. Thus, from the early years of the conquest of al-Hijaz, he dedicated himself and his state to this new mission. In addition, he declared that the pilgrimage would continue unhindered, promising free access to the Holy Places to all Muslims of all schools and creeds, and vowing to guarantee the security of the Holy Places and the pilgrimage. Thus, Ibn Saud endeavoured to find an international Islamic dimension for his state and his control of the Holy Places of Islam, as well as to prove that freedom and security were prevailing in those sacred places (Benoist-Mechin, 1965:177-191; Goldberg, 1986: 181; Harb, 1991: 83).

Furthermore, he was concerned with all Islamic affairs, and in particular the Palestinian issue, as was discussed in the previous chapter. His Islamic policy was based on the importance of strengthening the Muslims' belief and confidence in their God. Al-Ghulami (1980: 319) and Sharaf and Sha'ban (1983:277) noted that King Abdulaziz said that if the Muslims could only use their power effectively, their enemies would not be able to use a power like it. This power is the Muslims' faith and trust in God.<sup>1</sup> Also, the King believed that power lay in the influence of the unification of Islamic efforts and cooperation between all the Muslim states, associations and organizations.<sup>2</sup> He was convinced that no power could threaten the Muslims if they cooperated and supported each other<sup>3</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:277).

King Abdulaziz acknowledged that he, his family and his people were "*Soldiers among the soldiers of God*", working for the welfare of all Muslims all over the

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 47.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 838, 9 January 1941, Issue No. 1132, 8 November 1946, and, Issue No. 1281, 14 October 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 47.

world<sup>1</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:277). Moreover, al-Zirikli (1977b: 250) noted that the King declared that all he called for was that Muslims should speak in one voice and act in harmony: then they would be able to accomplish their duties towards their God and their countries. He added that he was supplicating God to awaken the Muslims and facilitate their cooperation and support for each other. King Abdulaziz stated that, "*The most valuable thing to him was the unification of the Word of the Muslims*" (al-Subait et al., 1990:465). Furthermore, King Abdulaziz said that he would be ready to sacrifice himself and his family for the objective of Muslims' unity (al-Zirikli, 1977b: 216; Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:183). He strongly believed that the Muslims, owing to their differing views, were more harmful to themselves than the foreign powers could ever be, and therefore he assumed that if they could only unite, they would stop harming themselves<sup>2</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:392; Bullah, 1984:7-8).

The Islamic attitude of King Abdulaziz was based on his strong sense of responsibility toward all Muslims around the world. He did not restrict his concern to the Islamic states or the countries in which the Muslim communities formed the majority, but heeded the call of Islamic minorities everywhere. He stated that he believed that he should respect the rights of the foreign states with which he dealt. He felt that he should maintain his commitments to the treaties with them and guarantee the security of their citizens in his state. Consequently, he also had rights which should be acknowledged by the international community. He was the protector of the Sacred Places, opening them for the pilgrims and securing their visitors from over the world, and so among these rights, he believed, was that each state should assist its Muslim citizens to visit the Holy Places. Moreover, he confirmed that there was a right which was more important to him; this right was that he had, in these distant

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<sup>1</sup> This was also confirmed by His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz on the Saudi TV channel, during his meeting with the members of the Muslim World League on 21 September 2004; [http://www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/2004-09-22/first\\_page/first\\_page06.htm](http://www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/2004-09-22/first_page/first_page06.htm); *Al-Faisal Magazine*, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Umm al-Qura Newspaper*, Issue No. 229, 16 May 1929.

countries, Muslim brothers, who should be treated satisfactorily and whose rights should be maintained<sup>1</sup> (Sharaf and Sha'ban, 1983:187).

## 6.2 Islam and King Abdulaziz's Worldview

It is logical that each state should, in its foreign policy, work to maintain and reinforce its interests through its international relations. However, in the case of Saudi Arabia, when there was a disparity between Islam and its interests, Islam would be given the priority. King Abdulaziz stated that he would reject every thing in the life of this world that was not in accordance with Islam<sup>2</sup> (al-Duraib, 1985: 41). Saudi policy towards the Soviet bloc was an example of this attitude. The Soviet Union was the first country to officially recognise Ibn Saud as the new King of al-Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and Its Dependencies, which it did in February 1926 (al-Rayhani, 1988:429; Vassiliev, 1998: 265; al-Tahiri, 1999:482). Moreover, during the Islamic Conference in 1926, the Chairman of the Central Spiritual Directorate of the Soviet Muslims, Mufti Rizauddin Sahreddinov, recognised King Abdulaziz as the Custodian of the Holy Places (Vassiliev, 1998: 266).

The Saudi-Soviet relationship improved for many reasons; among them was the aspiration of the Saudi Government not only to secure its position in the Islamic world but also to establish further international relations with the powerful states regardless of their religion or ideological persuasion, obtain recognition of its status and broaden the range of its foreign relations. To this end, King Abdulaziz established diplomatic relations even with the Communist and atheist Soviet Union (Goldberg, 1986: 181). It should be noted, however, that the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 27, 29 January 1926; al-Faisal Magazine, Issue No. 128, October, 1987, pp. 47.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 142, 2 September 1927, Issue No. 295, 1 August 1930, and Issue No. 389, 27 May 1932.

USSR was the first to take the initiative when it sent a letter to Ibn Saud offering its recognition of him as King of al-Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and Its Dependencies in February 1926 (Vassiliev, 1998: 265).

Another important reason for developing Saudi-Soviet relations was the British policy in the Middle East, especially in Palestine, and the policy of the other colonial powers in the region. King Abdulaziz's attitude towards the colonial powers and their interests in the Middle East, which might threaten his political independence, seems to have been the main reason underlying his desire to develop wide-ranging international relations with these powers including the USSR. This was put into effect with official visits conducted by the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal, to various foreign countries including the Soviet Union in 1932 (Piscatori, 1983: 36; Harran, 1999: 371-372).

Additionally, the Soviet Union was eager to expand its influence in the Middle East for commercial purposes, and to realise its old dream of reaching the warm waters of the South (Philby, 1955: 334; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 276). The USSR tried hard to secure commercial agreements with the Middle Eastern countries. They tried to conclude a commercial treaty with Ibn Saud but he was not enthusiastic. As a result, relations between them gradually declined until 1938, when the Soviet Government withdrew its diplomatic legation from Jeddah (Philby, 1955: 334; Piscatori, 1983: 36; al-Tahiri, 1999:479-483). However, it is important that this study analyse the historical background of these relations in order to discover why they were discontinued for more than fifty years until they resumed in 1990, and to find out whether or not the Islamic attitude of the Saudi state, which was a main pillar of its foreign policy, played an important part.

Al-Tahiri (1991: 390) believed that Communism was an ideology which worked against Islamic solidarity, as the adherents of Islam would put an end to Communism since it was explicitly atheist. In addition, the Communist countries feared the influence of Islamic solidarity over the millions of Muslims who were in subjection during the Communist era. The Kremlin's attitude to Islam became clear in the late

1930s, through the Soviet treatment of the Muslim minority in the USSR and also the propagation of Communist beliefs in the region (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 276-277; al-Tahiri, 1991: 480-484; Harran, 1999: 371). Communism thus aroused the strong antipathy of King Abdulaziz. The King made his attitude toward the atheists clear on many occasions and reiterated his hatred of atheist ideology.<sup>1</sup> Philby (1955: 335-336) pointed out that Ibn Saud made no secrets of his distaste for any dealings with a state which publicly professed its hostility to all religions and pursued a policy of persecution and repression.

In fact, the policy of the Saudi Government against Communism was similar to its policy towards Zionism. This was due to King Abdulaziz's belief that there was a strong link between Communism and Zionism. As a result, the Saudi policy towards both Communism, represented by the Soviet Union, and Zionism, represented by Israel, remained firmly unchangeable due to their enmity to Islam. This was clearly and officially stated by King Abdulaziz when he sent Crown Prince Saud to the U.S. in 1947. King Abdulaziz provided his son with general guidance, including his policy towards Communism and Zionism. He said that *"The USSR was considered an 'indirect threat' to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but we believe that it is a very dangerous threat for three reasons; because of the Communist ideology itself; we also believe in the firm relation between Communism and Zionism, and because of the Orthodox Church's Russian propaganda. We oppose Zionism and Communism and hold that the Orthodox Church should not be permitted to become a tool of Russian propaganda in the Arab countries"* (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 776; Vassiliev, 1998: 342).

Nevertheless, some writers have given different explanations for the severing of the Saudi-Soviet relations. Piscatori (1983: 36-37) claimed that the Soviets had declared that withdrawing their legations from Saudi Arabia was meant to show their displeasure at the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian Treaty in 1938, but it was more probably due first to the fact that the legation had very little work to do in Jeddah and secondly, to the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 389, 27 May 1932.



Soviet policy at that time of reducing its representation abroad, which had already led to the closure of consulates in Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan. At any rate, the decision to withdraw the Soviet legation from Jeddah was taken by the Soviets and had nothing to do with Saudi antipathy to Communism (Ibid). On the other hand, some writers argued that Saudi-Soviet relations were terminated because of the atheist ideology of the Soviets and their eagerness to export their ideology throughout the world, in addition to economic and commercial difficulties (Harran, 1999: 371-372).

After the Second World War, the Soviet Union tried to resume its diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but the Saudi Government did not desire to do so, due to the Soviet Communist ideology (al-Tahiri, 1991: 479). In the mid-1940s, the American influence in the Middle East grew and the U.S. worked to find allies to counteract the Communist influence in the region. Thus the USSR considered this a real threat, and it was the main reason behind the Soviet attempts to expand their influence in the area by looking for allies among the Arab countries (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 275-277; al-Tahiri, 1991: 485). Any kind of alliance with any of the foreign powers was strongly rejected by most of Arab countries (al-Tahiri, 1991: 485). Indeed, some of Arab countries, headed by Saudi Arabia, did not see any difference between the threat of the Soviet Union and the Israeli threat, as they had got to know of the USSR's ambitions in the region (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 276-277; Piscatori, 1983: 38). Of course, this resulted from the Soviet propaganda against the conservative Arab regimes and its support of Communist and radical movements in the Arab countries.

Actually, the Soviet Union was presented with a good opportunity as a result of the Saudi-British dispute over al-Buraimi in the early 1950s. The USSR tried to take advantage of this dispute in order to restart Soviet-Saudi relations through its offer of full support to the Saudis, in addition to furnishing them with the weapons they needed; the Saudi Government, however, did not accept (al-Tahiri, 1991: 485). The policy of Saudi Arabia towards the USSR did not change until the Soviets abandoned the Communist ideology in 1990. Nakhleh (1975: 51) maintained that the staunch opposition to Communism was one of the most important factors influencing Saudi

foreign policy. The Saudi Government justified its policy of not establishing international relations with the Communist bloc countries by stating that Saudi Arabia would be ready to reciprocate diplomatic representation with them if they acknowledged the existence of God (al-Tahiri, 1991: 480). Al-Tahiri (ibid) insisted that this was the main reason for the rejection by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of normal international relations with the Soviet Union and the entire Communist bloc.

### **6.3 King Abdulaziz's Foreign Policy toward the Islamic States**

During the King's reign, most of the Islamic countries were controlled directly or indirectly by foreign powers, mainly Britain, France, Italy, the Soviet Union and Holland. The foreign policies and international relations of most of the Islamic states at that time were therefore governed by those foreign powers. Consequently, in order to establish his relationships with other Islamic societies and states, King Abdulaziz was compelled to deal with the colonial powers which controlled those countries (al-Shuhail, 1987:175-176; al-Saud, 1990: 64; Harran, 1999: 443). However, there were some independent non-Arab Muslim states, such as Turkey, Iran (Persia), Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia. Some of them, such as Pakistan and Indonesia, gained their independence in the latter years of King Abdulaziz's reign (Harran, 1999: 453).

In general, most of the Islamic states acknowledged the spiritual and cultural unity of the faith, while maintaining the reality of territorial divisions. Thus, their relations were based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, the independence and territorial integrity of each member state, and the abstention from the threat of use of force against the territorial integrity, national unity or political independence of any member state.<sup>1</sup> In general, all the Muslim states, including Saudi Arabia, insisted that each refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the others and respect the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.muqatel.com/openshare/indexf.html>.

inviolability of common frontiers. They all commonly shared the emotive factor of Islamic sympathy and solidarity between their peoples (Piscatori, 1986: 73; Harran, 1999: 449-450)

Turkey was an independent Muslim state, and its official relations with Saudi Arabia started when Ibn Saud entered al-Hijaz and united it under his authority, and the Hijazi people called him their King. The Republic of Turkey was one of the first countries to recognise Ibn Saud as the King of al-Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and Its Dependencies in early 1926 (Philby, 1930: 325; al-Rayhani, 1988:427:429; Kostiner, 1993: 68-70). From that time, the representative of Republic of Turkey was resident in Jeddah; his work mainly consisted of supervising and taking care of the Turkish pilgrims' affairs. On 3 August 1929, the Government of the Kingdom of al-Hijaz and Najd and Its Dependencies, represented by Fuad Hamzah, signed a Friendship Agreement with Government of the Republic of Turkey, represented by Abdulghani Sinny. In this agreement, both countries recognised the full sovereignty of each other and agreed to establish their political relations according to international law<sup>1</sup> (al-Salloom, 1995:244-245; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 127).

Turkish-Saudi relations were at their lowest ebb during the time of Mustafa Kamal (Ataturk) due to the attitude of the Turkish Government towards Islam. The decline of Saudi-Turkish relations was a good illustration of King Abdulaziz's Islamic policy. The Turkish Government, under Ataturk, was known for its unyielding attitude towards the religion of Islam (Philby, 1930: 297). At the same time, Ibn Saud was well known for his hatred of dealing with any government which publicly professed its hostility to any religion at all, and in his view the secular Turkish Government should be regarded as a persecutor of Muslims (Philby, 1955: 335-336). However, after the death of Ataturk in 1938, Saudi-Turkish relations started to improve to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*, pp: 54-58; Public Record Office, FO 371/15292, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Arthur Henderson, the British Foreign Secretary, on 30 December 1930.

point of a normal friendly Islamic relationship, as was the case with the other Islamic states.

Saudi-Iranian relations started in a different way. When the Ikhwan entered Makkah and al-Madinah in 1924-1925, the fanatics among them demolished all the tombs and the historical places which had been regarded as shrines. These actions produced a thrill of indignation all over the Islamic world, including Iran. The Iranian Government dispatched a delegate for the purpose of ascertaining what had actually taken place and the probable intentions of Ibn Saud. Consequently, the Iranian Government withheld its recognition of Ibn Saud, and discouraged Iranians from undertaking the pilgrimage, until 1929 (Philby, 1955: 316-317).

In 1927, the dispute with Iran was exacerbated as a result of King Abdulaziz's undertaking in the Treaty of Jeddah to refrain from all aggression against, or interference in the affairs of the Gulf States, including Bahrain as a protectorate of Britain. The attitude of Ibn Saud was very supportive toward Bahrain against Iranian claims and Iran disagreed with the Treaty of Jeddah, for this treaty implicitly recognised the independence of Bahrain.<sup>1</sup> Iran saw this would put a stop to its ambitions in Bahrain and protested to the League of Nations during 1927-1934, claiming sovereignty over Bahrain, which was subsequently rejected. In 1948-1949, Iran escalated its campaign and claimed sovereignty over Bahrain, which was not accepted by Ibn Saud and this hindered Saudi-Iranian relations for a long time (Qasim, 1973: 227-237; al-Baharna, 1968: 167-195).

Nevertheless, in 1929, Habibullah Huwaida, the Iranian Consul in Syria, visited al-Hijaz, on an official mission on behalf of his Government to settle all the problems between the two Governments and negotiate a treaty. Also, in the same year, King Abdulaziz sent an official delegate to Tehran, which led to Irani's formal recognition of the Ibn Saud Government, and Huwaida was nominated to take charge of the

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/138, despatch from Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, to Hufhaniz Khan, the Deputy Persian Plenipotentiary Minister in London, on 18 January 1928.

Iranian Legation at Jeddah to mark the resumption of diplomatic relations. Consequently, an Agreement of Friendship was signed in August of that year by Abdullah al-Fadhil and Mohammad al-Rawwaf, representing the Saudi Government and Mahdi Qali, representing Iran<sup>1</sup> (al-Salloom, 1995:245; Harran, 1999:456-457).

Afghanistan was also an independent Islamic state, but at first Saudi-Afghani relations remained very basic and were restricted to pilgrims' affairs. Then, in 1929 the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan asked Ibn Saud to recognise King Nadir Shah (al-Sumari et al., 1999: 162). In 1932, the Government of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Afghanistan exchanged mutual recognition and signed an Agreement of Friendship. This was concluded in Jeddah by the Saudi representative, Yusuf Yasseen, and the representative of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Khan. The agreement was similar to those with Turkey and Iran. However, this agreement was not ratified by the two Monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan until 17 March 1934<sup>2</sup> (Harran, 1999: 457).

Ibn Saud's relationship with the Indian Muslims started very early, as they had shown concern with al-Hijaz issues since 1924. Also, King Abdulaziz was very sympathetic towards their demand for an independent state free from British colonialism and also from the influence of the Hindus. In 1947, when the Islamic Republic of Pakistan achieved its independence, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the first states to recognise it. Also, King Abdulaziz was very supportive of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan regarding the issue of Kashmir, which was discussed in the United Nations in 1948 (Harran, 1999: 458-459). On 25 November 1951, the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal, and Hajj Abdulsattar Sitt, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, signed an Islamic Friendship Agreement<sup>3</sup> (ibid: 459).

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951, pp: 44-47.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951, pp: 149-151; Public Record Office, FO 371/19019, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 18 May 1935.

<sup>3</sup> 'Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Issue No. 1406, 17 April 1953.

Indonesia was another Islamic state which had official relations with Saudi Arabia during King Abdulaziz's reign. As soon as the Indonesian nationalists announced their independent republic after the evacuation of the Japanese armies at the end of World War Two, Ibn Saud recognised their independence. The Indonesians initiated a new phase of resistance against Holland, which did not accept the independence of its former colony. After several years of military and political struggles, the Security Council recommended that Holland declare the independence of Indonesia, which took place in December 1949 (Kushman, 1958: 182-183). King Abdulaziz's policy towards the Indonesians during their struggle for freedom was one of complete support.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the first states to recognise the independent state of Indonesia and the two states exchanged diplomatic representatives immediately (al-Sumari et al., 1999: 178; Harran, 1999: 460-461).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umm al-Oura Newspaper, Issue No. 1119, 10 October 1946.

## Chapter Seven: King Abdulaziz's Relations with Britain

Several major issues were involved in Saudi-British relations from the Treaty of Jeddah in 1927 until King Abdulaziz's death in 1953. We shall discuss these issues below and examine their impact on the relations between both sides.

### 7.1 The Ikhwan Rebellion

On 20 May 1927, a decisive step for Ibn Saud's policy of international relations was taken when the Treaty of Jeddah was signed with Britain.<sup>1</sup> This gave Ibn Saud confirmation of the content of the previous treaties, Haddah and Bahrah in 1925, but, above all, explicitly recognised his new status as an absolute, independent and sovereign monarch over his new state and also cancelled the impact of the Treaty of Darin of 1915, which implied the protection of Britain over him (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 298; Mcloughlin, 1993:87; al-Saud, 2001:113-125). Indeed, the Treaty of Jeddah arranged and improved relations between the two countries and eliminated all reasons for previous disputes. It is not too much to say that the Treaty of Jeddah has, ever since that day, provided a firm foundation for friendship between the two nations, which has grown from strength to strength to the great advantage of both (Philby, 1948: 262).

This progress of Saudi-British relations, which led to the Treaty of Jeddah, was soon tested by a particularly severe crisis, which was to last for two years. The crisis was ignited by the British policy which encouraged the establishing of castles and forts as

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<sup>1</sup> Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp. 33-43; L/P&S/10/1166, copy of the Treaty of Jeddah between Ibn Saud and Sir G. Clayton, dated 20 May 1927.

new guard-posts across the Iraqi-Saudi border. This policy led to clashes between the Ikhwan and Iraqi desert patrols which were later commanded by Major I. B. Glubb and were supported by the British armoured cars and aeroplanes that pursued the Ikhwan to Najd. Ibn Saud protested to the British Government against these attacks. The attacks exacerbated the Ikhwan's opposition to Ibn Saud, who ordered the two major leaders of the Ikhwan, Faisal al-Dawish and Sultan Ibn Bijad, to withdraw from the border zone and leave the matter for him to settle by diplomacy. They refused and opposed his agreements with Britain and its allies in Iraq and Trans-Jordan. They insisted on continuing their Jihad against the infidels, on the one hand, and to render the agreements null and void, on the other, by attacking the borders of Iraq and Trans-Jordan (Williams, 1933:214-220; Philby, 1948: 263-264).

Being aware of the terms of the Treaty of Jeddah, Ibn Saud saw that he must act as a strong authority representing a state which respected and recognised its responsibilities in the international arena. However, his statesmanlike attitude was rejected by the rebellious Ikhwan, who disobeyed him. The Battle of al-Sibalah came about mainly because the Ikhwan were determined to act in accordance with their beliefs, and also due to the absolute refusal of Ibn Saud to permit his authority to be challenged on any account whatever (Philby, 1948: 264). Also, it can be said that, in accordance with the second article of the Treaty of Jeddah, in addition to the other Saudi-British treaties, especially those of Bahrah and Haddah, the British authorities co-operated with King Abdulaziz, to some extent, in the suppression of this movement. The British authorities in the Gulf nevertheless gave the rebels the right of asylum, which in Ibn Saud's view they ought not to have done. Ibn Saud insisted, through long negotiations with Britain, that the rebellious leaders should be handed over to him. Due to their commitments in those treaties, the British handed over al-Dawish, Nayif Ibn Hithlain and Ibn Lami to Ibn Saud in Khabari Wadha in 1930, after he had promised to spare their lives. These results were good indicators of the success of the Treaty of Jeddah (Dickson, 2002:336-345; Almana, 1980: 134-139; Helms, 1981:259-271).



It is worth mentioning here that one important result of the Treaty of Jeddah was the agreement of the British Government to sell King Abdulaziz the weapons he needed for the protection of his state and also to allow him to import them from any other state.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this fact, and also the fact that King Abdulaziz acted militarily against the rebellious Ikhwan and maintained his treaty commitment by not threatening the British protectorates, when he was forced to request weapons to suppress the revolt, his request was referred to a conference held in India in 1929. The conference, after a long delay, agreed to sell him weapons and ammunition at a cost of £20,958. This became a subject of slander in the London press, which stated that Ibn Saud was in debt to Britain for this amount, and the British Treasury Administration was concerned because no guarantees of settlement had been produced. Ibn Saud quickly paid the total amount to avoid open defamation (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 298-299).

## **7.2 Saudi Diplomatic Crisis with the British Ambassador**

Saudi-British relations remained good and Britain upgraded its diplomatic representation in Jeddah from consulate to embassy level and appointed Sir Andrew Ryan Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1930 (Philby, 1952: 123; Wahbah, 1960:95; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 101). However, Wahbah noted that the British Ambassador did not promote good relations as he was supposed to do and made several mistakes that could have affected Saudi-British relations. In 1932, he was the cause of a serious crisis between Saudi Arabia and Britain. This resulted from a clash of attitudes with regard to the slavery issue: Ryan insisted on giving asylum to one of the King's slaves without consultation with the Saudi Government. Therefore, the Saudi Government sent a memorandum on 5 February 1932 to the British Foreign Office, accusing the British Ambassador of putting obstacles in the way of good relations between the two countries. The memorandum enumerated his mistakes and

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<sup>1</sup> Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp38.

explained that the King would ignore them for the sake of his friendly relations with the British Government, but that he would not tolerate any more. At the end of the memorandum, the Saudi Government requested a quick and definite answer so that the dispute would not widen and the two Governments would not find themselves enmeshed in unnecessary problems (Wahbah, 1960:95-98).

The memorandum caused a stir within the British Government, and Ryan was called to London to discuss its details. The British Government replied on 21 March 1932, stating that Ryan had 30 years' experience in governmental jobs and had won the respect of various foreign secretaries, and that he had been chosen for the post of Minister Plenipotentiary in Jeddah because he was the most suitable person to strengthen relations between the two countries. The British Government supported its representative in Jeddah and denied what had been said about him in careful diplomatic language. At the end of its memorandum, the British Government asked the Saudi Government to withdraw its memorandum and insisted that, if Sir Andrew Ryan did not resume his duties in Jeddah, his government would not appoint another minister to replace him (ibid: 99-101).

The Saudi Government yielded to the British insistence and indicated that the purpose of its memorandum was to strengthen good relations with Britain and remove anything that could have an effect on the friendship with the British Government. The Saudi reply added that there was no personal enmity with Ryan and the Saudi Government had no objection to his returning to Jeddah. At the same time, the Saudi Government insisted that three matters should be maintained: Saudi honour, Saudi independence and the promotion of a friendly relationship with the British Government. The crisis was over, but it had had a negative effect on the Saudi Government (ibid: 99-101).

However, it is worth asking why the British Government threatened to sever relations with Saudi Arabia and also why the Saudi Government yielded to its threat. In fact, both Governments knew that Britain was the authority and power which had influence over most of the borders around Saudi Arabia. Moreover, King Abdulaziz

knew that Britain had the capability and the means to create unlimited problems for him and his newly-emerging state. Ibn Saud was very cautious in his dealing with his Hashemite antagonists to the north. The crisis had happened at a time of internal instability due to the Ikhwan rebellion and Ibn Rifadah's activities. Unfortunately, it also occurred during a Saudi financial crisis.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, King Abdulaziz bent to the storm. The King's wisdom and patience had averted a real deterioration in Saudi-British relations, which could have occurred as a result of the arrogant attitude of the British Ambassador at that time (Wahbah, 1960: 101-105).

### **7.3 Oil Concessions and the Saudi Financial Crisis**

In 1923, Ibn Saud gave an oil concession in the al-Hasa district to an English oil group calling itself the Eastern and General Syndicate, for £2000 a year. This group was represented at that time by Major Holmes.<sup>2</sup> The company carried out several attempts at exploration, but was at last compelled to withdraw due to financial problems. The concession was finally cancelled in 1928, due to the company's failure to pay the rent to Ibn Saud. Thus, the district remained unexploited (Howarth 1964:183; Longrigg, 1968: 100; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 692-694; Almana, 1980:217-218; Holden and Johns, 1981:111-112). However, the most important factor in the deterioration of relations between King Abdulaziz and Britain was the oil concession which was given to the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) in Jeddah on 29 May 1933 (Twitchell, 1953:151; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 696-697; Holden and Johns,

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45523, despatch from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 February 1945; American Archives, 890 F. 51/12, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 1 August 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 51/13, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 28 August 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 51/14, despatch from Mr. Salter at the American Consulate in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 14 November 1933.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363/13, despatch from George C. Cobb, the American Vice-Consul in Jerusalem, to the American Secretary of State, on 10 July 1923.

1981:118; Longrigg, 1968:107-108). Al-Rasheed (2002: 100) argued that the granting of the Saudi oil concession to an American company marked the beginning of the decline of British influence in Saudi Arabia, which entered its final phase after the Second World War.

In fact, the universal economic crisis of the early 1930s put further pressure on Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Saudi Arabia was experiencing a shortage of economic resources as a result of internal rebellions,<sup>1</sup> which forced the country to ask for a loan from its friends, mainly Britain<sup>2</sup> (Williams, 1933: 250; Wahbah, 1960: 104; Sluglett et al., 1982: 46-47). This financial crisis obliged King Abdulaziz to think deeply about looking for real help to exploit the hidden riches of his land, which he could not achieve by his own means. For this reason, in 1931, the King admitted to Philby that if anyone were to offer him a million pounds, he would be welcome to all the concessions in Ibn Saud's country (Philby, 1948: 291; Howarth, 1964:180; Mcloughlin, 1993:103).

It is worth mentioning here that Ibn Saud was in desperate need of funds to develop and build a regular army after the suppression of the internal rebellions, such as those of Ibn Rifadah and the Ikhwan.<sup>3</sup> These clashes revealed the urgent need to strengthen the army and to adopt modern methods of development in all state institutions. Of course, this new policy would increase his expenses. Therefore, King Abdulaziz sent his Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal, on a special visit to London, with Karl Twitchell's

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/20063, report by A. C. Oppenheim, the Deputy British Consul in Jeddah, sent by Albert S. Calvert to Anthony Eden on 26 June 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45523, despatch from Rupert Stanley Jordan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 February 1945; American Archives, 890 F. 51/12, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 1 August 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 51/13, despatch from Mr. Fox, the American Vice Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State, on 28 August 1933; American Archives, 890 F. 51/14, despatch from Mr. Salter at the American Consulate in Aden to the American Secretary of State, on 14 November 1933.

<sup>3</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/3856, despatch from Gerald S. de Gaury, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 10 January 1936.

report,<sup>1</sup> which indicated the possibility of oil reserves in the al-Hasa region, in the hope of persuading the British oil companies to purchase the oil concession in al-Hasa. The British reaction was that they were uninterested in Saudi oil.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Ibn Saud was keen to grant the concession to an English company because he had previously dealt with Britain.<sup>3</sup> He did not grant the concession to an American company until he despaired of the British companies, which it seemed, had lost interest in getting concessions in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, he shifted his hopes to the Americans (Wahbah, 1960: 104; Alman, 1980:221; Holden and Johns, 1981:114).

However, when they realised how productive the Saudi oilfields were likely to be, and also due to their apprehensions regarding the new American competition in the region, the British tended to believe that Ibn Saud chose the American company (the Standard Oil Company of California) because it had offered him more, but in fact the offers were equal in respect of estimation of proceeds per ton. But the American offer outweighed the British one in other ways. Ibn Saud explained his position in terms of pure economic interest. The Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) had won out because it had agreed to grant Ibn Saud loans which he was in desperate need of. SOCAL undertook to pay an immediate loan of £30,000 in gold, with another £20,000 in eighteen months, plus a first annual rental of another £5,000 in gold and a subsequent rental of the same amount to be paid in agreed foreign currencies. In addition, the American company agreed to pay its revenues with a currency that could be changed into gold, while the British company (the Iraq Petroleum Company) rejected the idea of a preliminary loan altogether, and would only offer to pay in Indian Rupees, a practice common in the Gulf area at that time (Howarth 1964:185; Alman, 1980:223-226; Holden and Johns, 1981:117-118; Longrigg, 1968:107-108).

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Twitchell was an American geologist who became the first person to undertake a systematic geological survey of Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz, citing King Faisal and King Fahd, mentioned that the British knew that the Saudi territories were rich in oil, but they wanted to delay the production of Saudi oil until later, because they controlled Iraqi and Iranian oil. This was during my interview with him in Jeddah on 31 December 2003 and 1 January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> India Office, L/P&S/12/3856, despatch from Gerald S. de Gaury, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 10 January 1936.

The important step taken by the King of preferring the American company to a British one has been a subject of much discussion. Some researchers have tended to believe that SOCAL won the concession as a result of a change in Ibn Saud's policy towards his old friend, Britain. They argued that the King preferred the American oil companies, which were going to take care of investment operations in his country, because he believed, with good reason, that the American companies were not only stronger than the British but also less subject to governmental influence. Therefore, American companies could contribute to the development of the Saudi economy more effectively than British companies. It has also been claimed that the King, knowing that the United States of America was very far away from the Middle East and had no imperial heritage, believed it had no political ambitions in the region, as the European powers did (Benoist-Mechin, 1965:226; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 700; Vassiliev, 1998; 315; Van, der Meulen, 1999: 133).

In fact, there was a political consideration behind Ibn Saud's step to exclude states which had a colonial outlook, among them Britain, from this concession. Al-Zirikli (1977a: 700) and Twitchell (1953: 154) noted that good offers, with more advantages than the American one, had been submitted to the King from Germany, Italy and Japan with a view to obtaining concessions in Saudi Arabia, but Ibn Saud agreed to the American offer because the U.S. had no political ambitions in Arabia. Moreover, the British policy of colonialism, especially in Palestine, enraged the King, due to its support for the Zionists, which was made clear by the King through many letters sent by him to the British Government.<sup>1</sup> This might be an important reason why King Abdulaziz worked to attract the Americans to the Middle East through commercial relations. He believed that the Arabs required another strong ally as another source of support in their critical situation in Palestine. He told the Arab High Committee that the Arabs should create a strong link with another major foreign power before thinking of resisting Britain. To do otherwise would make resistance an unsafe venture (Zu'aitir, 1980: 256).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

In spite of this, the two sides, King Abdulaziz and Britain, were keen to maintain their friendly relations. Therefore, the Treaty of Friendship, which was concluded between the two parties in Jeddah in 1927, was renewed on 3 October 1936,<sup>1</sup> and again on 3 October 1943<sup>2</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 299-300). Furthermore, in order to maintain cordial relations with Britain and to achieve an advantageous balance in his international relations between America and Britain, Ibn Saud agreed, on 23 December 1934, to give the right of mining in most of Saudi Arabia to a British mining company located in London under the name of the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate Ltd<sup>3</sup> (al-Sumari et al., 1999: 366-3379). In addition, Ibn Saud agreed, in July 1936, to give the oil concession along the coast of the Red Sea to a British company called Petroleum Concessions Ltd.<sup>4</sup> The granting of these concessions demonstrated that Ibn Saud valued his friendly relations with Britain and was concerned to do nothing that might damage them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp. 236-240; Public Record Office, FO 371/20059, despatch from Prince Faisal to Reader Bullard on 3 October 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp. 296-298.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/19015, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 24 February 1935; American Archives, 890 F.63/4, despatch from Mr. W. Murray, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, to Mr. K. Twitchell, the Manager of the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate Ltd, on 10 August 1934; American Archives, 890 F.63/5, despatch from Mr. Palmer at the American Consulate in Jerusalem, to the American Secretary of State, on 8 August 1934; American Archives, 890 F.63/6, despatch from Mr. K. Twitchell, the Manager of the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate Ltd, to Mr. W. Murray, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, on 13 October 1934; American Archives, 890 F.63/7, despatch from Mr. K. Twitchell, the Manager of the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate Ltd, to Mr. W. Murray, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, on 11 March 1935; American Archives, 890 F.63/8, despatch from Mr. L. Callanan, the American Consul in Aden, to the American Secretary of State on 25 June 1935.

<sup>4</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp 388-405; India Office, L/P&S/12/2149, copy of the Treaty of 1936 between the Saudi Government and Petroleum Concession Ltd, dated 9 July 1936.

## 7.4 The Italian and German Influence and the Second World War

During the 1930s, the spreading influence of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany became obvious. Italy became a real threat in East Africa, which lay next to Ibn Saud's newly-emerging state. This might have been an important reason for Ibn Saud to grant the British companies two concessions in the western coastal region of his realm. His action could have been intended to use the British as a barrier against the augmented Italian threat in the southern part of the Red Sea.<sup>1</sup> This threat became a reality when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935-1936 to secure and control the Red Sea and its coasts (Vassiliev, 1998; 322; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 82-83).

As a result, both Governments, the British and the Italian, entered into negotiations, which were concluded in April 1938,<sup>2</sup> with the Agreement of Rome, which aimed at avoiding any collisions between the two powers in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. That agreement provided for an exchange of information about the movements of the armies of the two countries, and also stated that no bases would be established in the region except with the knowledge of the other side. The two sides declared that they should not threaten each other's interests or interfere in Saudi Arabian and Yemeni affairs, as both powers had already secured a strong position in the region. They would also cooperate to prevent any other power threatening their interests in those two countries<sup>3</sup> (Sa'ed, 1964: 391-392).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/19020, despatch from The British Foreign Office to Albert S. Calvert in Jeddah on 14 September 1935; Public Record Office, FO 371/20064, yearly report by Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 29 February 1936.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.00/48, despatch from Mr. Childs at the American State Department, Near Eastern Division, on 13 May 1938; American Archives, 890 F.00/49, despatch from Mr. Childs, at the American State Department, Near Eastern Division, on 20 May 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 407/76, despatch by E. Perth, the British Ambassador in Rome, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 8 April 1938.



On 5 January 1939, the Saudi Government, after an intensive study of that agreement, sent a memorandum to the British and Italian Governments, declaring that Saudi Arabia would not be committed to any agreement, and that the Saudi Government was not party to. Therefore, the Saudi Government would not agree to any condition that would restrict its independence and freedom with respect to the Italian-British agreement or any other agreement. Furthermore, the Saudi Government insisted that its relations with them were based on international law and also on its treaties with each of them as one sovereign state with another.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Britain and Italy, in March 1939, separately replied that the agreement only concerned the obligations of Britain and Italy and did not impose any commitment on Saudi Arabia. Also, each of them acknowledged that its relations with Saudi Arabia were in accordance with international law and according to its treaty with Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup>

On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, which led to the outbreak of the Second World War. The war brought with it new challenges to Saudi-British relations. For the duration of the war, King Abdulaziz and the Government of the United Kingdom felt the necessity for stronger relations and real friendship. During the difficult days of 1940, with the resulting victories of Germany against the Allies, which led to the fall of France and Italy's military alliance with Germany, some of King Abdulaziz's advisors were content that the Axis power would win, but he did not share their view; he looked forward to the ultimate victory of the Allies, and based his actions on this belief and hope (Twitchell, 1953:105; Howarth, 1964: 199). Despite his personal views in favour of the Allies,<sup>3</sup> and also his strong belief that Britain would not be defeated, the King recognized that neutrality was the best policy to protect the

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp.248-249; Public Record Office, FO 371/24589, yearly report by Hugh S. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax dated 18 July 1940; Public Record Office, FO 406/77, despatch from Prince Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, to Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, on 5 January 1939.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat, 1922-1951*. Pp.249-250; FO 406/77, despatch from Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Prince Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, on 22 March 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939.

internal affairs of his state from interference by either side, or from any attack by the victor at the end of the war. Therefore, he officially declared his strict neutrality and maintained it in order to avoid bringing his country under the direct influence of either side, and resisted all attempts by both sides to involve him<sup>1</sup> (Twitchell, 1953:105; Vassiliev, 1998; 322; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 299).

At the beginning of the War, and as a result of its outbreak, the German Minister Plenipotentiary in Baghdad, Fritz Grobba, was expelled and the German mission was closed. Therefore, Hitler asked Mussolini to mediate with Ibn Saud to receive Grobba as Minister Plenipotentiary in Jeddah. The German Government wanted to use Jeddah as a station for their intelligence activities and Nazi propaganda.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, this move disturbed the British and they expressed their concerns to the Saudi Government. Ibn Saud asked the British their opinion; they informed him verbally that they did not welcome the arrival of Grobba, stating that his presence would cause many problems for the Allies.<sup>3</sup> However, as the German Government had had no Minister Plenipotentiary in Saudi Arabia before, the Saudi Government apologised for not accepting the German request with a strong promise to discuss it according to the progress of the war or after the end of it<sup>4</sup> (Wahbah, 1960: 107-108; Vassiliev, 1998; 322).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23269, despatch from Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 24 October 1939; FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939; Public Record Office, FO 371/23272, despatch from the British Foreign Office to Alan Trott in Jeddah on 24 August 1939; Public Record Office, FO 371/24590, report issued by Halifax to the British Government dated 2 July 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/24587, despatch from the British Foreign Office to Francis S. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, on 30 January 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/27267, despatch from Francis H. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, the British Foreign Office, on 24 October 1941.

Why did Ibn Saud ask the British their opinion on whether he should accept the German request or not? Taking into consideration that Britain and Germany were at war and that the Germans had asked for a Minister Plenipotentiary in Jeddah after their Ambassador was expelled from Baghdad by Britain, acquiescence to the German request would be considered an act of enmity by Ibn Saud towards Britain and all its allies. On the other hand, if he refused the German request, it would be construed as a British interference in his affairs. The dilemma was clear from the discussion of this matter which took place between Ibn Saud and his advisors, who all agreed on neutrality. They concurred in their belief that Saudi Arabia was an independent state which had the absolute right to do whatever suited its interests and that Britain had no right to interfere in this matter. They also believed that the interference of Britain in such a matter would degrade Saudi sovereignty (Wahbah, 1960: 107-108).

Nevertheless, the King and his advisors were aware that the countries of the British Empire and those within its orbit of influence were the main source of most of Saudi Arabia's imports. India was the main supplier of food grain. Moreover, most pilgrims came from Islamic countries that were under the dominion of Britain and its Allies (Vassiliev, 1998; 322). In addition, Saudi Arabia was surrounded by British protectorates and British military bases and the British navy dominated the Red Sea and the Gulf (ibid). Also, according to Wahbah (1960:50) Ibn Saud recognised that the British navy was the main supplier of Saudi Arabia with most of its imports, and if, for any reason, Britain were to blockade the Saudi ports or stop the transportation of pilgrims to the Holy Places, this would cause him trouble; whereas, Germany had no real interests in Saudi Arabia that required the presence of a Minister Plenipotentiary. It was clear to Ibn Saud that the Allies would take action against Saudi Arabia if it became a theatre for German intelligence activities and Nazi propaganda against them. Therefore, he found that his interests required maintaining friendly relations with the Allies (Wahbah, 1960: 107-109; Vassiliev, 1998; 322). In fact, his stance on this problem was a good illustration of Ibn Saud's political merits. It served to assert the absolute right of every state to adopt the most advantageous course of action in its foreign policy, and thus to maintain and reinforce its interests through its international relations.

As a result of the War, the Saudi economy deteriorated due to the decline of pilgrimage to the Holy Places and the shrinking of oil revenues, which were concurrent with the growing costs of imported goods (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 251-253; Holden and Johns, 1981:126; al-Khuwaiter, 1998: 139-140; Vassiliev, 1998: 323-324). Therefore, the Saudi Government requested a loan from SOCAL.<sup>1</sup> The King also asked Britain to help him overcome his financial difficulties.<sup>2</sup> The budget deficit was so large that Saudi Arabia threatened to cancel the concession, which forced the company to seek the help of the U.S. Government. President Roosevelt decided to help Saudi Arabia with indirect aid and demanded that Britain negotiate with the Saudi Government and allocate necessary funds, using part of the loan of around 4.5 million dollars which the United States had recently granted to Britain. Of course, the SOCAL representative secretly informed Ibn Saud that Britain would give him the loan he had asked for as the U.S. proposed. Finally, after protracted negotiations, Britain agreed to give Ibn Saud the loan that he had long been seeking (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 251-253; Vassiliev, 1998: 323-324).

A question arises here. Did Britain support Ibn Saud only at America's insistence? The answer is simply no. The year 1941 was very severe for Britain and its Allies. Britain was driven from many strategic locations and its presence in Egypt and the entire Middle East was threatened. London itself was at the mercy of German bombers. Ibn Saud was carefully following the course of the War and was aware of all these events. At that time, Britain feared that its troubles could be aggravated by the Arabs, whose figurehead was King Abdulaziz, and tried to get closer to him.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939; Public Record Office, FO 371/27264, despatch from Francis S. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office on 10 November 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/24587, despatch from B. Lacy at the British Foreign Office to C. Syers, the British Secretary of Finance, on 8 February 1940; Public Record Office, FO 371/27264, despatch from Francis S. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office on 10 November 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/27261, despatch from Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, to Hafiz Wahbah, the Saudi Plenipotentiary Minister in London, on 26 May 1941.

became clear when the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, asked Hafiz Wahbah, the Saudi Ambassador to London, if he believed that Ibn Saud would act against the Allies during this crisis, and whether there was any one who was able to influence him, either in Riyadh or somewhere in Europe. Wahbah replied that if Ibn Saud had been a European leader, he might have acted as Mussolini did towards Britain. Wahbah added that the King was an Arab and an Oriental man who believed in the great value of friendship. Wahbah insisted that even if the King could not assist his friends in time of need, at least he would never stab them in the back. Furthermore, Wahbah stated that the King always acted according to his own rights and that once his mind was made up no one could change his stance (Wahbah, 1960: 110-111).

It is worth asking here what kind of support Ibn Saud provided to the Allies. He did not provide them with any military aid. In fact, he was taking financial aid from them, as we have seen. The valuable support that Ibn Saud provided to Britain consisted of maintaining stability in Saudi Arabia and also in the Arab and Islamic worlds.<sup>1</sup> While Britain and America experienced a great deal of trouble in tempering the strains in the Middle East during their long war, Saudi Arabia was the only country in the Arab world which was very stable and did not cause any disturbances to the Allies (Philby, 1948: 262). There was some sympathy towards the Axis in many places around the world, among them the Islamic and Arab countries. In India itself, Britain faced a determined campaign of disobedience and non-cooperation headed by the Indian Congress and it was possible that many Indian Muslims might have energetically assisted a Japanese invasion of India (Twitchell, 1953: 107).

If Ibn Saud, with his position in the Islamic World, had preached a Holy War or had been actively pro-Axis, he could have cut the British supply and communications lines by asking Arabs and Muslims everywhere to do so. At that time, it was possible that anti-British rebellions would spread and put the region into the hands of Hitler. In

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/27261, despatch from Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, to Hafiz Wahbah, the Saudi Plenipotentiary Minister in London, on 26 May 1941.

fact, Britain had real difficulties with the Iranian Government, in Iraq during al-Kalian's revolt and with the Vichy Government in Lebanon and Syria. Britain did not have the capability to maintain large numbers of forces in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, while Rommel was pressurising their Eighth Army in the North African desert. If the Arabs had allied themselves with the Axis, the Allies would have been compelled to use huge armies to maintain order in the Arab countries, at a time when they were in desperate need of troops. Also, they would have incurred heavy expenses, much greater in value than the aid they were providing to Ibn Saud to overcome the Saudi economic crisis (Twitchell, 1953: 105- 107; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 961-962).

However, the supportive attitude of King Abdulaziz towards the Allies was clear from his stance during the Battle of al-'Alamain when he sent the Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Mansur, to Egypt to speak to the Indian Muslim troops to make clear Ibn Saud's support, as a Muslim leader, for the Allies in the hope of encouraging them in this decisive battle (Twitchell, 1953: 105). A further example of King Abdulaziz's beneficial support was his stance on the anti-British revolt of Rasheed al-Kailani in Iraq in April 1941. This revolt was supported by Germany as a major step in its advance towards the Middle East, and it placed Britain in a dangerous position. Al-Kailani asked Ibn Saud to support him, but King Abdulaziz strongly criticized the revolt and refused to help, saying that it would be an act of treachery against Britain, to whom he was committed by treaties and strong friendship. Moreover, Ibn Saud stated that the Arabs' duty was, if unable to help Britain, to be neutral, and suggested to the Iraqis that they cease their hostilities against Britain and negotiate with it peacefully<sup>1</sup> (Twitchell, 1953: 106-107; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 237-237; Dickson, 2002:477; Vassiliev, 1998: 322-323).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/27261, despatch from Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, to Hafiz Wahbah, the Saudi Plenipotentiary Minister in London, on 26 May 1941; India Office, L/P&S/12/3758, Despatch from Dickson, the British Political Agent in Kuwait, to the British Resident in Bushire on 3 June 1941.

In general, the policy of Ibn Saud was the best possible for his country and for the Allies as well. His stance had the implicit agreement of the Allies.<sup>1</sup> In fact, an official announcement of his sympathy towards the Allies or a declaration of war against the Axis in the early stages of the War might have damaged Ibn Saud's influence in the Islamic and Arab Worlds and would also have driven the Axis powers to attack Saudi Arabia. Had this happened, the Allied forces available in the region would not have been sufficient to protect the coasts of Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup> It could be said that the attitude of Ibn Saud during the War, from its beginning to its end, was more beneficial to the Allies than it would have been had he been directly allied with them.<sup>3</sup> Britain itself asked for nothing more than his formal and important neutrality and his strong resistance to Hitler's temptations to join him.<sup>4</sup> Vassiliev (1998: 322-323) stated that Hitler promised Ibn Saud, through the Saudi Ambassador in Switzerland, Fuad Hamzah, "the crown of the King of all the Arabs" if he attacked Britain but Ibn Saud strongly refused.

This attitude of Ibn Saud was highly appreciated by the British Government. This was acknowledged by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in his appreciative address to Ibn Saud during the historic meeting between them on 17 February 1945, in Egypt.<sup>5</sup> *"It is,"* Churchill said, *"both an honour and a pleasure for me to meet one who has so greatly proved in deed to be a friend in need"* (Philby, 1948: 262; Holden and Johns, 1981:126). Certainly, the British Prime Minister knew about Ibn Saud's rejection of the German overtures during the War. He saw the stance of Ibn Saud as the absolute proof of the King's friendship, and was moved to utter this cordial greeting. However, some historians have offered other reasons for Ibn Saud's policy during the War. They regarded his attitude towards Britain, and later America, as the logic behaviour of someone who acted in complete accord with his religious

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/24590, report issued by Halifax to his Government dated 2 July 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/27267, despatch from Francis H. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, the British Foreign Office, on 24 October 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/45542, despatch from Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador in Cairo, to Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, on 3 February 1945.

beliefs and in the interests of his people and his country. In their view, Ibn Saud calculated that his interests lay with Britain and America and acted accordingly (Howarth, 1964:199). In fact, Ibn Saud's attitude towards these two countries during the War demonstrated his political characteristics.

## 7.5 The British Position on the Saudi-Hashemite Rivalry

Saudi-British relations remained very friendly and cooperative through the Second World War. Until the end of the War, Ibn Saud was concerned to retain the friendship of Britain and acknowledged the importance of Britain in his international relations and foreign policy. After the War, Saudi-British relations began to decline gradually due to several factors, among them was the British position on the old Saudi-Hashemite rivalry.<sup>1</sup> Van der Meulen (1999: 71), former Ambassador of Holland to Saudi Arabia, recalled that when he asked Ibn Saud his opinion of the British policy in the Arabian Peninsula, Ibn Saud's replied that *"he had hated the British policy on many occasions and he still hated it."* In Ibn Saud considered that Britain had machinated against him in 1921, by appointing the sons of Sharif Husain, Faisal and Abdullah, to the thrones of Iraq and Trans-Jordan (ibid). Ibn Saud believed that the Hashemite House, which ruled in Iraq and Trans-Jordan, had always hated him, as they could not forgive or forget his taking of al-Hijaz from them.<sup>2</sup> They would work to break up his realm, for then they could return to al-Hijaz with the support of their friends, the British, who in this regard were merely pretending to be his friends (Graves, 1950:249-250; Mcloughlin, 1993:110; Pison 1999: 195-196; Dickson, 2002:284; al-Rasheed, 2002: 103).

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<sup>1</sup>New York Post, Friday, 30 April 1948, *"Ibn Saud's Star Wanes"*;  
<http://www.varchive.org/obs/480430.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/62112, despatch from Alan Trott, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 4 December 1947; New York Post, Friday, 30 April 1948, *"Ibn Saud's Star Wanes"*; <http://www.varchive.org/obs/480430.htm>.



In addition, Ibn Saud may have suspected that Britain planned and supported the Hashemites' aspirations to rule in the Greater Syria and Fertile Crescent projects, which could not be achieved without British assistance.<sup>1</sup> King Abdulaziz saw that these projects were designed to benefit the Hashemite House in Iraq and Jordan. He was concerned for the stability of his state and was fearful that these kinds of integration plans would constitute a real threat to his unified territories and the sovereignty of his country<sup>2</sup> (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 286-287; Vassiliev, 1998: 330). Some have argued that Ibn Saud, as a result, worked against the strategies of the Baghdad-Amman Axis by supporting the aspirations of the majority of the people in Syria and Lebanon for the independence of their countries as sovereign states, free from the rule of the Hashemite House<sup>3</sup> (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 286-287; al-Tahiri, 1991:405-406; Harran, 1999:414-417).

It was clear to Ibn Saud that the Hashemites, with strong support from Britain, would be a real threat to his state.<sup>4</sup> This may be partly why he sought to strengthen his relations with another strong power after a long period of deep-seated mistrust of the British (Vassiliev, 1998: 327; al-Rasheed, 2002: 103-104). Ibn Saud turned to the United States of America, with which he had developed strong commercial and political relations after the Second World War. These relations allowed him to discuss his fears regarding British policy, in particular Britain's support for the Hashemites. Mcloughlin (1993: 181) cited the view of the American Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Rives Childs, given in a communication to the State Department: "*Ibn Saud was*

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/62112, despatch from Alan Trott, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 4 December 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, CO 831/59/12, despatch from Sir Miles Lampson, the British High Commissioner and Ambassador in Cairo, to the British Foreign Office on 6 November 1941; Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/52823, despatch from Laurence B. Smith, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 23 February 1946; Public Record Office, FO 371/45237, despatch from Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador in Cairo, to the British Foreign Office on 23 March 1945.

<sup>4</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/62112, despatch from Alan Trott, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 4 December 1947.

*genuinely concerned at what he saw as his vulnerability with respect to the Hashemites and, in particular, Jordan. Whereas five years ago he felt that he could rely on the British to rein in the Hashemites' ambitions he no longer had that confidence and felt that it was only the US that could guarantee his security."*

If Ibn Saud had mistrusted Britain, despite a long period of friendly relations due to its support of the Hashemite House, why had he waited so long? It may be that Ibn Saud had known about the British policy from its inception, but had not been able to take serious action due to Britain's strong international influence. He had therefore waited for a suitable time to remove his country from the influence of Britain. Now, after he had strengthened his relations with the United States of America, a newly dominant international power, the time was ripe (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 261; Vassiliev, 1998: 327; al-Rasheed, 2002: 100-104). The King's confidence in his relations with his new ally permitted him to express his anger towards the British for their support of the Hashemites, as his son, Prince Saud, indicated during an official visit to United States in 1947. King Abdulaziz openly acknowledged the existence of some political disputes with Britain that had arisen due to its unfriendly policy of supporting the Hashemites and other political opponents against him in the region (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 775).

## **7.6 The Al-Buraimi Oasis Dispute and Britain's Protection of the Gulf Shaikhdoms**

In King Abdulaziz's view, the British policy regarding all of the boundary issues between him and his neighbours, the British protectorates, especially after the Second World War, was highly unsatisfactory.<sup>1</sup> This was another major factor, in addition to

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

the British position on the Saudi-Hashemite rivalry, which led to the decline of Saudi-British relations after the War. However, this was the only factor that led to a military dispute between Saudi Arabia and Britain (which was acting on behalf of its protectorates). The British view was that it should stand by its protectorates' rights, especially the small states in the Gulf region, which were unable to resist Ibn Saud's claims without British support.<sup>1</sup> For his part, Ibn Saud believed that the British would machinate to arrange the annexation of parts of his land to its allies in the small states which they had created around him (Dickson, 2002: 284). This situation has been discussed in chapter four on Ibn Saud's relation with each of those states. British policy on this issue had a direct and important effect on Saudi-British relations and eventually caused a military clash between the two sides as a result of their dispute over al-Buraimi, which led to the cessation of Saudi-British relations.

The dispute over al-Buraimi arose because the pacts between Britain and Ibn Saud did not specify the borders between Saudi Arabia and those protectorates. The reason for this vagueness was that Britain had not been interested, at that time, in the affairs of the internal lands of the Arabian Peninsula; its only concern had been to secure its strategic position on the coast of the Gulf and to protect its sea routes. The reasoning behind the British policy of securing its protectorates in the Gulf from Ibn Saud had been indicated in 1930: "*Britain holds the front door to these principalities on the littoral, but it does not hold the back door*" (Zahlan, 1982: 68). This idea of protecting the coast of the Gulf by Britain has been advocated by the British Government.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, King Abdulaziz believed that he had the right to bring any part of the Arabian Peninsula, the whole of which had once been governed by his ancestors,

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, L/P&S/11/222, despatch from Hugh V. Biscoe, the British Political Resident in Bushire, to the British Indian Government on 18 August 1930.

under his authority<sup>1</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1397; al-'Uthaimen, 1999:292). Furthermore, Zahlan (1982:69-70) noted that King Abdulaziz had stated to the British Agents in the region that the peoples of the Gulf Shaikhdoms were his subjects as they had been the subjects of his fathers before him, but he accepted that the people of those areas were now under the formal protection of the British, and that he ought to comply with his treaties with Britain. However, while the rulers of those areas could lay claim only to the towns, the internal deserts and the tribes who roamed them had always been under his and his ancestor's sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Britain changed its policy and started to pay attention to the internal domains after Ibn Saud granted the concession to explore oil in the eastern part Saudi Arabia to the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL).<sup>3</sup> This angered the British Government, which sought to reactivate the boundary issues after having been asked by SOCAL about the specific boundaries of its concession. The British reply was based on the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913, which had always been opposed by Ibn Saud<sup>4</sup> (Sinan, 1969:196-197; Qal'aji, 1965:587-588; Mcloughlin, 1993: 132; Mustafa et al., N.D. 109-110). In 1937-1939, the Sultanate of Oman and the Shaikhdoms of the Omani Coast gave the oil concession in their territories to a British

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<sup>1</sup> India Office, L/P&S/18/B450, report by the India Office on the Gulf dated on 25 June 1935; India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>2</sup> India Office, R/15/2/158, despatch from George Cole, the Deputy British Political Agent in Bahrain, to T. Fowle, the British Political Resident in Bushire, on 6 July 1935; India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>3</sup> India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>4</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 335; Public Record Office, FO 406/72, despatch from Sir Andrew Ryan, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, on 27 June 1934; India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

company (Petroleum Concession Limited).<sup>1</sup> This was at a time when these oil companies insisted, together with their governments, on defining the borders of those areas<sup>2</sup> (Howarth, 1964: 234; Anderson, 1969: 28-31; al-'Aqqad, 1973:168).

In order to protect its companies' interests against their American competitors, the British Government started to intervene deeply in the internal provinces of the Arabian Peninsula, using its strong influence over the Sultan of Oman and the Shaikhs of the smaller Gulf states,<sup>3</sup> which had the effect of further prolonging this problem. This British policy, especially after the Second World War, was a main reason why the boundary disputes reached the level of military action. However, the persistence of Saudi Arabia and Britain, on their positions led to many conferences being held to specify the boundaries between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, even before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. However, the War induced both sides to shelve the boundary problems temporarily and cooperate against the new threat (Sa'ed, N.D.:136; Qal'aji, 1965:588).

In 1948-1949, further discoveries of oil in the disputed areas led to renewed arguments between Britain and Saudi Arabia. This caused a serious dispute once again in 1949, as the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) increased its activity of exploring and extracting oil in the area.<sup>4</sup> In 1949, ARAMCO employees

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ar dh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 337-338; Public Record Office, FO 371/20843, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 28 February 1937; Public Record Office, FO 371/21908, yearly report by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 26 March 1937; India Office, L/P&S/12/2073, report from Alan Trott in Jeddah, to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, dated 1 October 1937.

<sup>2</sup> [http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/3040\\_1601.htm](http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/3040_1601.htm).

<sup>3</sup> India Office, R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

<sup>4</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./76, despatch from the American Department of State to American Embassy in London on 24 May 1934.

appeared in disputed areas, such as al-Dhafrah and Sabkhat Muti, which were considered by Britain to be part of the Abu Dhabi Shaikhdom. On behalf of Abu Dhabi, the British Political Agent in Coastal Oman, Stobart, submitted a strong protest to the representative of ARAMCO, who was in that disputed area. He asked him to withdraw from the areas immediately, as no agreement had yet been reached regarding its political annexation<sup>1</sup> (Lenczowski, 1960: 144; Kelly, 1964: 142-143; Sinan, 1969: 201; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1393-1394).

ARAMCO replied that it had no concerns with the existing argument regarding the borders, and that any objection to its activities should be addressed to the Saudi Government. The Saudi Government, in view of the critical situation, agreed to withdraw from the areas under dispute, emphasising that this would not prejudice the rights of Saudi Arabia in that area. Further correspondence was exchanged between the Saudi and the British Governments, each party protesting against the trespass committed by the other. To solve this problem peacefully, a series of negotiations took place in September 1949 between Yusuf Yasseen and, later, Fuad Hamzah, representing the Saudi side, and a British delegation. Also, many memorandums between the two Governments were exchanged for about one year but nothing came of these<sup>2</sup> (Sinan, 1969: 201; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1394).

Early in 1951, further exchanges of correspondence were made, which led to direct negotiations between the two parties. A conference was held in London between 8 and 24 August of that year. The Saudi side was headed by the Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal, and Britain was represented by Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. During this conference each side adhered to its former position. Consequently, Prince Faisal suggested calling the governors of the disputed areas to

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 397-398.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 398-405.

attend a round-table conference. This was accepted by Britain, and both sides agreed to stop all oil exploration activities in the disputed areas. As a consequence, a meeting was held in al-Dammam in Saudi Arabia on 28 January 1952, but after long negotiations, and due to the insistence of each side that its demands be met, the conference ended on 14 February 1952, without any important development. Both sides also adhered to the restrictions which had been applied to the area<sup>1</sup> (Lenczowski, 1960: 145; Sinan, 1969: 202-203; Holden and Johns, 1981: 147; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1395).

As a result of complaints made to the Saudi Government by the people of al-Buraimi against the new British exploration missions to the region, the Saudi Government protested to Britain. The Saudi Government informed the British that these complaints came not only from the head of the al-Shamsi tribe, a major tribe in the area, but also from most of the al-Bulushi Shaikhs. The British replied that the person concerned was one of their political officers, who was visiting the area on a normal administrative mission. In August 1952, as a response to further complaints by the Saudi citizens in the al-Buraimi oasis, the Saudi Government appointed Turki al-'Utaishan as Governor of al-Buraimi, the main residential area in these territories, and linked him directly to the province of al-Hasa. The Saudi Government also sent with him a civilian staff of about 40 people as clerks, technicians, policemen and servants. In response, Britain officially protested against this action and demanded the withdrawal of al-'Utaishan and his subordinates. Britain indicated that it would take any action it deemed necessary if al-'Utaishan was not withdrawn<sup>2</sup> (Lenczowski, 1960: 145-146; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1396-1397; Holden and Johns, 1981: 147; Vassiliev, 1998: 346).

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 407-417.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 418-422.

Discussions again started between the two Governments. The Saudis argued that Britain had no authority over al-Buraimi, as they took the view that this area was not under the control of any of the rulers protected by Britain.<sup>1</sup> Saudi Arabia stated that the British activities in the area were the cause of the people's complaints, which had forced the Saudi Government to send al-'Utaishan,<sup>2</sup> and reiterated the Saudi desire for a peaceful settlement of this dispute. While negotiations were being conducted between the two sides, Britain sent a military force from al-Shariqa, which camped about 4 kilometres away from Hamasa village (al-'Utaishan's position) and blockaded the Saudis, and deadlock ensued. Furthermore, British planes flew threateningly over the village of Hamasa. Ibn Saud protested to Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, warning him that he would raise the matter with the Security Council of the UN if the British forces continued their activities in the area. Eden declared his readiness to withdraw the Oman coast forces as soon as al-'Utaishan was withdrawn. Britain ceased its flying operations but did not withdraw its forces, and at the same time Eden continued to express his desire for a peaceful settlement<sup>3</sup> (Sa'ed, 1964: 449; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1396-1398; Holden and Johns, 1981: 147; Vassiliev, 1998: 346).

There appeared to be a stalemate, and so the Saudi Government asked the U.S. Government to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Britain. As a result, Raymond Hare, the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia submitted a personal proposal to both parties requesting them to put off provocative works, preserve their respective positions in al-Buraimi as they were, and resume direct negotiations. Both Governments accepted this preliminary proposal and started a new discussion; as a result, both agreed to sign an agreement, called the Standstill Agreement, on 26 October 1952. According to this document, both sides agreed that the forces of both should remain in place, that they would not block the provision of material supplies to

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 418-422.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: 421.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 421-424.



the other party, and that the local people should return to their normal life. The agreement also indicated that it had no effect on the claims of the two sides and that negotiations would be resumed to find a solution by friendly means<sup>1</sup> (Lenczowski, 1960: 146; Sinan, 1969: 215-217; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1398; Holden and Johns, 1981: 147; Vassiliev, 1998: 346-347).

To achieve a practicable and fair solution, King Abdulaziz proposed the formation of a committee of three members. The committee was to consist of a member from each party, the third being neutral. He suggested that the neutral member be from the United States, which was a friend of both parties. This committee would then be given the time and the means to visit the region and arrange a referendum among the people by which they would choose the government they wanted to be subject to. Britain doubted the possibility of solving the problem through direct negotiations and rejected the referendum on the pretext that the propaganda of Ibn Saud and the bribes would prevent a real knowledge of the citizens' desire (Sinan, 1969: 214; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1398). The British Government believed that the unlawful presence of Turki al-'Utaishan in the al-Buraimi Oasis was playing on with the traditional loyalty of the tribes. Britain also claimed that he was using his position to extend his influence over vast areas. The Saudi answer to this accusation was that the traditional loyalty of the people of al-Buraimi had always been to Riyadh for more than 150 years (Holden and Johns, 1981: 146; Goldberg, 1986: 12-18; Vassiliev, 1998: 165), and never to "minor" rulers on the coast working according to the wishes of a foreign power.<sup>2</sup>

As Arabs, the local people and al-'Utaishan dealt with each other in accordance with tradition and both regarded the British as interfering foreigners. The British felt slighted when they saw that the local people preferred to talk and deal with al-

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 425-426.

<sup>2</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah*, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 430.

'Utaishan. Therefore, The British Prime Minister, Churchill, sent a message to King Abdulaziz in April 1953, emphasising Saudi-British friendship, but indicating that the burden of the message was unpleasant due to his Government's determination to honour its commitments to Ibn Saud's neighbours. Churchill added that the British Government would reinforce its forces around al-Buraimi to support its stance. The British forces besieged al-'Utaishan in Hamasa with many military posts. Furthermore, British forces occupied the al-Jawa Oasis and the British companies resumed oil exploration in the disputed areas<sup>1</sup> (Qasim, 1974: 249-250; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1399). Of course, this was unpleasant news for the Saudi Government as Churchill had told Ibn Saud.

King Abdulaziz died on 9 November 1953, by which date his relations with Britain had reached their lowest ebb. After a long period of friendly relations, Britain chose to protect its interests by occupying, by military force, part of Ibn Saud's realm on behalf of the Gulf Shaikhdoms, rather than to support its real friend.<sup>2</sup> The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill has been quoted to have been described Ibn Saud as the friend who had given his support to Britain during the darkest days of its history, during his speech in the House of Commons on 27 February 1945.<sup>3</sup> However, this warmth between the two leaders was ended by the al-Buraimi dispute. During 1953, Ibn Saud regretted that his friend, Winston Churchill, had now displayed enmity towards him over al-Buraimi (McLoughlin, 1993: XVI). McLoughlin (1993: 179) cited Philby as saying that *"the matter of the dispute with Britain over al-Buraimi was one which caused deep upset to Ibn Saud."* Regrettably, this took place as a result of a conflict of interests caused by the discovery of oil in al-Buraimi, which added a vastly different dimension to the old cleavages (Anthony, 1982: 149-

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 430-432.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: 420-421.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ardh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 420-421.

151). Certainly, this was a good example of the influential role of the economic factor in the international relations of states.

King Abdulaziz died when al-'Utaishan was still being besieged in Hamasa and British companies were intensively searching for oil in his ancestors' land, which he and his people strongly believed that it belonged to them (al-'Ajlani, N.D.: 377; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1397-1399; Vassiliev, 1998: 347). Metaphorically speaking, it can be said that the British-Saudi friendly relationship evaporated by the fires of al-Buraimi oil. However, it is important to state that this dispute was not the first between Saudi Arabia and Britain. There had been other major disputes, such as that of al-Jahra in Kuwait and that concerning the Iraqi borders, which caused Major Glubb to pursue the Ikhwan into Saudi territories, as described before. It is worth asking why had the two Governments successfully managed many disputes with tolerance and wisdom, but had completely failed to control and peacefully solve the al-Buraimi dispute. Times had changed: in the old days, a gentleman's agreement had been able to resolve boundary disputes between the Gulf states, but this was no longer adequate in the days of oil (Howarth, 1964: 234).

In the past, Britain had been sure of its relations with Saudi Arabia and feared no strong competition for its friendship and privileged position in Saudi foreign policy. But now, the U.S. had toppled Britain from this prime position and had become the new influential foreign power in the Middle East (Woodward, 1962: 399-401; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 261; Sluglett et al., 1982: 54; Vassiliev, 1998: 327&380). Also, Britain was forced to put a stop to the ambitions of ARAMCO, whose area of operations extended to include most of the oil-rich region (al-'Ajlani, N.D.: 371-372; Howarth, 1964: 234; Sa'ed, 1964: 437-440). The Saudi Government was no longer dependent on British aid or support in the international arena, due to the Saudi membership of the UN and its developing relations with most members of the international community. Moreover, the Saudi position in the Islamic and Arab worlds had been strengthened, especially after the creation of the Arab League in 1945, which provided for mutual assistance and support among Arab countries, in

case of foreign invasion or threat ('Assah, 1971:128-131; al-Zirikli, 1977:1207-1209; al-Humoodi, 1998: 528-529; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 193-197).

The rise of American influence as a leading state in world politics, especially in the Middle East, was among the factors which led to a decline in British influence in the region (Woodward, 1962: 399-401; Frank, 1985: 588). Therefore, Britain felt that it must work to secure its influence in the protectorates in order to guard its strategic presence in the Gulf, even if this policy were to lead to a serious dispute with King Abdulaziz. It is worth noting that the Saudi Government emphasised that it had no quarrel with either the Shaikh of Abu Dhabi or the Sultan of Oman. The dispute was with the British Government, which had created the problem due to its desire to control the area's oil. The Saudi Government strongly believed that the policy of the British Government was solely responsible for these disputes, and that without this policy there would have been no problems over the boundaries<sup>1</sup> (al-'Ajlani, N.D.: 371-372; Sa'ed, 1964: 437-440). The Saudi dispute with Oman and the United Arab Emirates over al-Buraimi was eventually settled in 1974.

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, al-Tahkim li Taswiyat al-Niza' al-Iqleemi Bayna Masqat wa Abu Dhabi wa Bayna al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah: 'Ar dh Hukumat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyyah al-Su'udiyah, Vol.1, 1955. Pp: 413-414; R/15/2/465, memorandum sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Jeddah on 2 February 1948.

## **Chapter Eight: Saudi Policy towards the United States of America**

This chapter discusses the major lines of policy adopted by King Abdulaziz towards the United States of America, with regard to political, economic and security issues.

### **8.1 Saudi Response to the Early American Contact**

The Middle East region, including Saudi Arabia, did not occupy an important position in the minds of American politicians during the early 1900s, partly because of the isolationist policy of the United States and also because American commercial interests in the region were limited. Thus, the United States had no clear policy or objectives in the Middle East at the beginning of the twentieth century (Nolte, 1964: 152). In comparison to other powers, the United States' presence in the Arabian Peninsula was new. In general, the Americans entered this region with minor interests connected with economic, educational, medical, missionary and cultural purposes (Nolte, 1964: 151-152; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 36-37). Perhaps the reason the United States politicians did not give a high priority to this region was that they viewed the Middle East as being within the sphere of the European powers, mainly Britain, and it was the key area for the British Empire's communication with India (Nolte, 1964: 150; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:278; Bryson, 1977: 118; Abu 'Ulayyah, 1997; 180-182; Vassiliev, 1998: 324).

However, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and many other countries hoped that the United States would support them and oppose the Mandate Powers in accordance with the principle of self-determination, which was advocated by President Wilson in a major speech to the U.S. Congress in 1918 (Hoskins, 1954: 100-101; al-'Uqbi,

1984: 37). The U.S. began to take an ever-increasing interest in the region after the First World War. Indeed, from that time, the United States' policy of isolation was no longer consistent with the interests of the American oil companies, which had by then begun to expand their foreign operations around the world, and began to look particularly at the Middle East as being a region containing tremendous oil reserves and which would well repay future investments. Therefore, the American companies protested to their government against the hegemony of Britain over the oil industry, which forced the American Government to put pressure on the British Government, asking for equal rights for American oil companies in accordance with the principle of Open-Door Policy in the lands which were under the Mandate (Lenczowski, 1960: 20; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:229-230; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 44; Randall, 1985: 13-17).

Oil companies in the U.S. considered the Agreement of San Remo, concluded in April 1920 between France and Britain and whereby the two powers agreed to share the oil of the Middle East, as effectively closing this vital market in their faces and putting the American economy at the mercy of that of Europe (Speiser, 1950:114; al-'Uqbi, 1984:37-38; Randall, 1985: 44-46). Therefore, they began to press their government to adopt a more active policy in defence of their interests. These campaigns continued until the matter reached the U.S. Congress. The pressure exerted by the oilmen was meant to force the U.S. Government to intervene against the policy of denial imposed on them by Britain, and continued until the Government protested to Britain in 1920, demanding an equal opportunity for the American oil companies in the Middle East (Speiser, 1950:114; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:228-230; al-'Uqbi, 1984:38; Frank, 1985: 589; Vassiliev, 1998: 313). That protest marked the beginning of American involvement in the Gulf region, especially in terms of relations with Saudi Arabia, which were overtly and overwhelmingly grounded in economic matters, mainly the Kingdom's oil<sup>1</sup> (Halliday, 1982: 125; Keohane, 1982: 169). This came at the time when Ibn Saud desperately needed to end Britain's influence in the region for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./117, despatch by Mr. Knabenshue at the American Consulate in Iraq to the American Department of State on 22 June 1939.

Despite early American oil ambitions in the region, which led to an American company becoming the owner of the oil concession in Saudi Arabia, the United States did not recognise Ibn Saud as quickly as other powerful countries, such as Britain, France, Holland and Russia. Several attempts were made by Ibn Saud to establish diplomatic relations with the United States, but the latter was reluctant to recognise him and only did so in May 1931.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the United States did not appoint a diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia until March 1942. Previously, the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo had been accredited simultaneously to Saudi Arabia (Woodward, 1962: 399; Vassiliev, 1998: 325; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 123-124 & 169-171). Both Saudi Arabia and the United States established their relationship in a deliberate attempt to end the European hegemony, mainly that of Britain, in the Middle East.

## **8.2 Oil and the Granting of a Concession to an American Company**

On 7 July 1933, a Saudi Royal Decree was issued approving an agreement signed in Jeddah on 29 May 1933, by the Saudi Minister of Finance, Abdullah al-Sulaiman, on behalf of the Saudi Government, and by Lloyd Hamilton, on behalf of the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL).<sup>2</sup> The period of concession was sixty years, covering the whole of eastern Saudi Arabia as far west as the Dahna desert. Also,

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F. 01/15, despatch from the American Acting Secretary of State to the American Vice Consul in Aden on 22 February 1930; American Archives, 890 F. 01/29A, despatch from the American Department of State to W. R. Castle, the American Minister in Cairo, on 9 February 1931; American Archives, 890 F. 01/291/2, despatch from the American Secretary of State indicating the instruction of the American President to go ahead with the recognition of Ibn Saud, on 9 February 1931; American Archives, 890 F. 01/37, despatch from Ray Atherton, the American Ambassador in London, to the American Secretary of State, on 8 May 1931.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./15, despatch from G. P. Merriam, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 10 June 1933; American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./16, despatch from G. P. Merriam, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 19 June 1933.

SOCAL had the priority over Saudi half-rights in the Neutral Zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Company was to pay an initial interest-free loan of £30,000 in gold sovereigns and, after eighteen months, a second interest-free loan of £20,000, also in gold sovereigns. There was, furthermore, to be an annual rental payment of £5,000 in gold sovereigns. Then, there were to be two loans of £50,000 in gold sovereigns, separated by one-year gap, with the first to be paid as soon as oil was discovered in commercial quantities. Thereafter, the Saudi Government would receive royalty payments of four shillings in gold, as revenue for each ton of crude oil extracted (Longrigg, 1968: 107-108; Holden and Johns, 1981:118-119; Vassiliev, 1998:316-317; al-Sumari et al., 1999:317-337).

Saudi oil played a major role in the improvement of Saudi-American relations. The primary exploration works confirmed that the areas of concession contained the largest oil reserve in the world<sup>1</sup> (Keohane, 1982: 168; Frank, 1985: 592). Benoist-Mechin (1965:230-231) quoted Harold Ickes, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, as describing the winning by the Standard Oil Company of California of the Saudi oil concession as the greatest commercial deal of the modern era. As a result of this agreement with SOCAL, the American Government, following its interests, was persuaded by Ibn Saud to go for greater political involvement through stronger relations with Saudi Arabia (al-Rasheed, 2002: 92). Thus, Saudi Arabia became the first independent Arab state to develop important relations with the United States of America (Leatherdale, 1983: 211; al-Rasheed, 2002: 104).

The granting of this oil concession was a remarkable step by Ibn Saud, which served to improve Saudi international relations.<sup>2</sup> Only a few months after SOCAL secured the concession, the United States Government, on 7 November 1933, signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia to exchange and regulate political, economic and commercial relations between the two states.<sup>3</sup> An important result of this accord was

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<sup>1</sup> Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan. In *'Idha'at Programme*, on al-'Arabiyyah TV Channel, on 9 June 2004.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./117, despatch by Mr. Knabenshue at the American Consulate in Iraq to the American Department of State on 22 June 1939.

<sup>3</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951.Pp.128-130.



the commercial agreement to grant each other a preferential position with regard to taxes and fees on exchanged merchandises. This agreement lasted for several years after the death of Ibn Saud (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 685-686; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 170 & 346-349).

Some historians have argued that the King, by strengthening Saudi-American economic relations, created local rivalry in Saudi Arabia, between Britain and the United States.<sup>1</sup> This reduced British influence in Saudi Arabia but induced both the British and the Americans to support King Abdulaziz financially, in order to strengthen the stability of Saudi Arabia, develop the country and reinforce Saudi Arabia's position in the international community (Woodward, 1962: 399; Abu 'Ulayyah, 1997; 180-182; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 169). Others have claimed that King Abdulaziz, through his relationship with the United States, which was seen as a new international power, was able to liberate his country from the British influence (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 261; Vassiliev, 1998: 327; al-Rasheed, 2002: 100-104). Ibn Saud's initiation of cordial relations with America was a main factor in the USA's displacement of Britain from its prime position in Saudi foreign policy (Woodward, 1962: 399-401; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 261; Sluglett et al., 1982: 54; Vassiliev, 1998: 327&380).

In May 1939, a new concession expanded SOCAL's area of operation to include all the sedimentary formation from the west side of the Dahna desert to its boundaries with the igneous rocks, which contained no oil reserves.<sup>2</sup> This new concession included the neutral zones in which Saudi Arabia had equal rights with Kuwait and

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363/2, despatch from J. Morton Howell, the American Minister in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 27 December 1922; *New York Post*, Friday, 30 April 1948, "Ibn Saud's Star Wanes"; <http://www.varchive.org/obs/480430.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./15, despatch from G. P. Merriam, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 10 June 1933; American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./16, despatch from G. P. Merriam, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 19 June 1933; American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./113, despatch from Bert. Fish, the American Consul in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 21 June 1939.

Iraq. It also included the south-eastern border of Saudi Arabia with the Sultanate of Oman and the Lower Gulf Shaikhdoms (Twitchell, 1953: 153-154; Hoskins, 1954: 205; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 699-700). It was clear that this expanded concession had an important political meaning. It involved the Americans in neighbouring areas, which were within those under British protection.<sup>1</sup> The expansion provoked a severe territorial dispute between Saudi Arabia and the British Government, which was acting on behalf of its protectorates, as was discussed in the previous chapter.

During the Second World War, the production of Saudi oil almost ceased and led to a reduction in oil revenues, owing to the Axis power's threat to the Allies' oil supplies and transportation lines. Furthermore, the War discouraged many pilgrims from visiting the Holy Places.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the War led to a financial crisis in Saudi Arabia, which put Ibn Saud in a very critical position and forced him to ask the Allies for foreign aid (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 251-253; Holden and Johns, 1981:126; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 68; Vassiliev, 1998: 323-324). Therefore, the Saudi Government requested a loan from SOCAL.<sup>3</sup> The budget deficit was so large that Saudi Arabia threatened to cancel the concession, which forced the company to call for the help of the U.S. Government (Vassiliev, 1998: 323-324). President Roosevelt asked Britain to support Saudi Arabia with part of the loan of around 4.5 million dollars, which the United States recently granted to Britain, as discussed before (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 251-253; Vassiliev, 1998: 323-324).

The United States was concerned about the expansion of the Axis powers' influence in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, which would threaten its huge interests. Saudi

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./76, despatch from the American Department of State to American Embassy in London on 24 May 1934.

<sup>2</sup> American Archives, 890 F.404/16, despatch from Bert Fish, the American Consul in Egypt, to the American Secretary of State, on 4 October 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/23271, cipher telegram by Sir Reader Bullard, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, on 1 December 1939; Public Record Office, FO 371/27264, despatch from Francis S. Bird, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to the British Foreign Office on 10 November 1941.

Arabia, under the stress of financial crisis, might be obliged to ask the Axis governments for financial support, which would put Saudi Arabia, with its Islamic and Arab weight, into the balance on the Axis side (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 961-962). Therefore, the Americans worked towards strengthening their relationship with Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the American oil companies and their representatives were urging the U.S. Government to support Ibn Saud as a strong and true friend of the Allies. They warned their government that negotiations were under way between Ibn Saud and Britain for a substantial loan, which would strengthen the British position in Saudi Arabia and threaten American oil interests, which were vital to the U.S. economy (Woodward, 1962, 396-397; Holden and Johns, 1981:128; Vassiliev, 1998: 324-325).

SOCAL representatives asked their government to provide direct aid to Saudi Arabia and suggested that the Kingdom should be included in the Lend-Lease Act. Under this programme, SOCAL would be relieved from providing the funds which Ibn Saud needed from its own treasury. As a result, in February 1943, Roosevelt took the initiative and instructed his government to include Saudi Arabia in the Lend-Lease aid programme at an estimated cost of \$99 million. This enabled the American oil companies to neutralise the influence of their competitors, especially the British companies, with the direct help of the American Government (Speiser, 1950:115-116; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 253-254; Holden and Johns, 1981:128; Keohane, 1982: 170; Vassiliev, 1998: 324-325).

President Roosevelt justified his decision and declared that the protection of Saudi Arabia was vital to the defence of the United States (Holden and Johns, 1981:128; Vassiliev, 1998: 325). Additionally, Harold Ickes, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, acknowledged that Saudi oil was crucially important to American national security (Frank, 1985: 591). Indeed, this showed how successful Ibn Saud was in taking advantage of the rivalry between the international powers in the area, especially

Britain and the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> This rivalry was acknowledged by Harold Ickes saying: "*When one turns to the question of who the Saudi concession should be protected against, it is surprising to find that the perceived enemy was Great Britain and the British-controlled companies*" (Frank, 1985: 591).

As more new oil fields were discovered in Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz recognised the real importance of the strategic wealth which lay hidden beneath his land. He recognised how much its revenues would contribute to the development of his country. At the same time, oil would tempt the Great Powers, chief among them the United States, to interfere further in the region. In Ibn Saud's view, this was a real threat to his state's sovereignty and internal stability. It was true that the United States was considered as one of the biggest oil producers and exporters, but at the same time, it was the biggest oil consumer. Its demand for oil from overseas sources was increasing day by day until it reached its peak when the United States started to import oil directly in 1940s (Keohane, 1982: 168; Randall, 1985: 13- 42). In fact, it was at this time that Saudi oil became very essential to the U.S., due to the growth of its demands and the shrinking of its domestic oil production (Speiser, 1950: 241; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 274-275; Keohane, 1982: 168; Frank, 1985: 590-591).

By the early 1940s, America had become seriously interested in Saudi Arabia and started to forge political link with it. Undoubtedly, the ever-increasing importance of Saudi oil for the American economy led to a fundamental change in the United States' policy towards Saudi Arabia (Philby, 1955: 337-338; Baram, 1978, 218; Keohane, 1982: 168; Frank, 1985: 590). The United States Government decided to bring to end European, mainly British, political supremacy in the region and take it over and reinforce, maintain and protect its economic and commercial interests (Woodward, 1962, 399-400; Baram, 1978, 218; Holden and Johns, 1981:128; Vassiliev, 1998: 326; al-Rasheed, 2002: 104). This improvement of American policy towards Saudi Arabia was confirmed by the historical meeting between King Abdulaziz and the

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<sup>1</sup> American Archives, 890 F.6363/2, despatch from J. Morton Howell, the American Minister in Cairo, to the American Secretary of State, on 27 December 1922; New York Post, Friday, 30 April 1948, "*Ibn Saud's Star Wanes*"; <http://www.varchive.org/obs/480430.htm>.

American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt on 14 February 1945. This meeting constituted a great step towards establishing a strong and stable Saudi-American relationship, which has lasted to the present day.

### **8.3 The Saudi-American Summit Meeting**

After the Yalta Conference, on 11 February 1945,<sup>1</sup> as the Second World War drew to a close, with victory assured for the Allies, President Roosevelt announced his desire for a meeting with Ibn Saud. Therefore, a telegram was sent to the American Ambassador in Jeddah, William Eddy, asking him to arrange matters with Ibn Saud. The King consented, and so the Americans arranged to take him by one of their ships to meet President Roosevelt, who would be waiting for him on board the U.S.S. Quincy in the Bitter Lakes of the Suez Canal. On 14 February 1945, the two leaders met and discussed several important issues of concern to their countries; at the head of the agenda was the Palestine problem (Philby, 1955: 338; Howarth, 1964: 203-207; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 256-257; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1155-1166; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 108-117). The discussion between the two leaders on this problem and the increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine will be separately discussed in detail in the next section.

During his meeting with Roosevelt, the King agreed that the Kingdom's eastern ports could be used by the Allies and consented to the building of an air force base. However, he insisted on the condition that Saudi Arabia should under no circumstances be occupied and that no part of its territory should be alienated (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1177; Vassiliev, 1998: 226-327). This was to ensure Saudi sovereignty which, for him, was the most important factor that he thought it might be threatened by the conflict of interest between the Great Powers. As a consequence, the areas

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/yalta.htm>.

intended to involve other foreign powers in the Palestine issue rather than restrict it to Britain, as a result of its support to the Zionist aspirations. Hence, in November 1938, he started to implement his new strategy: his first letter to President Roosevelt attempted to influence the American policy on Palestine which was seen in support of the Zionists and asked the U.S. for help in opposing British actions in Palestine. This letter explained and argued for the historical and natural rights of the Palestinians and tried to disprove the Zionist claims (al-Zirikli, 1977a:1103-1108; Abu Zlam, 1984:558; al-Musallam, 1985:130-134).

The Second World War was about to end, and King Abdulaziz had undoubtedly become one of the most influential Arab leaders of his time. President Roosevelt, who proposed the summit meeting in the Bitter Lakes in February 1945, as mentioned above, believed that he should try to obtain Ibn Saud's approval of the settlement in Palestine of Jewish refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe after the end of the War. Moreover, Roosevelt hoped that he would be able to convince King Abdulaziz to agree to the partitioning of Palestine, and that the King would then be able to persuade the Palestinian people and the Arabs generally to agree that the Jews should be given a national home there (Hull, 1948:1522; Howarth, 1964: 203; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:257; al-Zirikli, 1977a:1155; Holden and Johns, 1981:133).

Convinced of the justice of his arguments, the President recounted to Ibn Saud, during their Summit, in detail, the horrible oppression the Jews had suffered under the Nazis and explained the determination of the Zionists to find a land which would give the Jews security at last. King Abdulaziz's decisive response was: *"If the Jews are to be compensated for the outrages perpetrated against them, then it should be the perpetrators who carry the cost. If the United States and its allies wished to see the Jews settled on land of their own, then it should be German land that is appropriated"*. When Roosevelt broached the issue of Palestine, Ibn Saud was uncompromising. *"Why should the Palestinians be expected to atone for the sins of the Germans? Why should the United States look to its friends rather than to its enemies to make reparations for the crimes of its enemies?"* (Wahbah, 1960: 168-169; Howarth, 1964: 206-207; Benoist-Mechin,

1965: 257; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1158-1163; Holden and Johns, 1981: 137; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 116-117).

Despite this difference in views, the meeting was conducted with great courtesy, both men showing respect for each other's customs. President Roosevelt was impressed by the simple clarity with which Ibn Saud presented the Arab case. It was remarkable how King Abdulaziz was able to influence Roosevelt to accept the Arab point of view, or at least to assume a posture of neutrality. Upon his return to Washington, President Roosevelt told the Congress that he had learned more about Palestine from King Abdulaziz than in all the arguments and memoranda he had ever had from his staff (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1165; Holden and Johns, 1981:137). With regard to Palestine, according to Benoist-Mechin (1965:258) Roosevelt said that Of all those with whom he had dealt throughout his entire life, no one had given him less than he obtained from this iron-willed Arabian King.

It is quite clear that King Abdulaziz's meeting with Roosevelt should be judged by any standard as a spectacular success. During the Summit meeting, the King was so persuasive that the American President pledged not to assist the Jews against the Arabs. Moreover, he promised not to make any decision without full consultation with both sides. Shortly before his death, these verbal assurances were confirmed in a letter, dated 5 April 1945. In this letter, Roosevelt reassured the King that he would take no action hostile to the Arabs. It was clear that Roosevelt was committing himself, not as an individual, but as the Chief of the Executive Branch of the United States Government, which meant that this stated policy was unchangeable (Wahbah, 1960: 167; Howarth, 1964: 206-207; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1196-1197; Holden and Johns, 1981:138; al-'Uqbi, 1984:159-169).

However, United States policy did not remain unchanged as Roosevelt had promised. Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, changed the United States policy on the Palestinian issue and broke President Roosevelt's promises to Ibn Saud (Howarth, 1964:207; Holden and Johns, 1981:142; al-'Uqbi, 1984: 120-121). It was a tragic chapter: King Abdulaziz scored an impressive initial victory, but changes in the

United States' political scene transformed a promising beginning into a calamity. It is evident that this was due to President Truman's sympathy with the Jewish situation. In November 1945, Truman summoned his Ambassadors in the Arab countries to Washington, and annulled his predecessor's promises with the words *"I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands of people who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents"* (Howarth, 1964:207; Holden and Johns, 1981:142).

Truman assumed that the United States could support Zionism while maintaining its commitments to Ibn Saud. In vain, King Abdulaziz tried to persuade the President to renounce this abhorrent policy by reminding him of his predecessor's commitments made in correspondence beginning in August 1945. The King also tried to influence the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry when he met them in March 1946 (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1221-1283; Holden and Johns, 1981:142-143; al-'Ash'al, 1986:142-144; Harran, 1987:40-42; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:130-146). However, King Abdulaziz's appeals to Truman proved fruitless. Truman officially endorsed the partition of Palestine and supported this policy at the UN in 1947 (al-Ghulami, 1980:172-173; Holden and Johns, 1981:143; Harran, 1987: 42; Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:256).

It could be said that King Abdulaziz's policy towards the U.S. on the issue of Palestine was based on determination and firmness. The King made his position unmistakably clear and worked to persuade the American Government and public opinion to liberate U.S. policy from the influence of Zionist propaganda. According to al-'Uqbi (1984:116-117) and Vassiliev (1998: 343) the King explained the historical and natural rights of the Arabs in Palestine, and argued cogently that if Germany had committed crimes against the Jews, then Germany should pay for its crimes and accommodate the Jews or compensate them for their losses. Moreover, if the West was so concerned about settling the Jews, why could they not be distributed among the more than fifty Allied states? Not only was Palestine too small to carry the full burden, but it had already assumed more than its share, so why not let every country carry its fair share? He also emphasised that the Arabs were so determined to resist



the Jewish state that it could only be established and maintained by force. Arab hospitality was reserved for friends and not for enemies. Furthermore, he warned the international community, mainly the U.S. and Britain, that there was a real threat to peace in the Middle East which would harm their interests. Finally, the only way the Palestine dispute could be resolved was by handing the country to the Arabs. Any other solution would constitute clear aggression which the conscience of humanity could not accept (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 777-778 and 1146-1197; Vassiliev, 1998: 343).

In the late 1940s, it became clear to King Abdulaziz that the new ally would not be different from the old one with regard to Palestine (Howarth, 1964:207). The Arabs, led by King Abdulaziz, were frustrated and disappointed by the attitude of the Americans toward the Arab fundamental issue of Palestine. This, in addition to the end of the British Mandate and the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, was enough to ignite the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, as discussed before. This took place around the time when Saudi-American economic relations reached their climax by 1946, when the United States of American had started to import Saudi oil due to its oil crisis (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 274-275).

These events had prompted some researchers to ask questions concerning the role that oil could have played in the Arab-Israeli war if the Saudi Government had undertaken to cut off oil supplies to the countries which supported Israel. Some scholars, among them Van der Meulen (1999:124), criticized the King for not stopping oil supplies to the U.S. due to its attitude toward the Zionists during the War of 1948. Moreover, he insisted that if King Abdulaziz had done so, he would have decisively raised the profile of the Arab issue (Palestine) in the international arena and would have obliged the American Government to implement President Roosevelt's promises. However, the King's point of view concerning the severing of economic relations with the U.S. and Britain was different. According to Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah (1999:275-276) the King believed that it would not have had the strong effect on rich and industrialised countries that it would have had on Arab countries. Furthermore, such

drastic action would have dragged the Arab countries into political and economic dispute with these two states.<sup>1</sup>

However, this did not mean that Saudi Arabia did not contemplate using this factor in order to put pressure on the U.S. with a view to influencing the American stance. In fact, King Abdulaziz did play the economic card in November 1946, through his Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal. Faisal told Terry Duce, the Deputy of the Operations Department of ARAMCO, that if the U.S. did not change its policy toward Palestine, the King might be forced to change his attitude toward American economic interests in his country, particularly oil interests. Moreover, as a result of the U.N. Resolution in 1947, which sanctioned the partition of Palestine, King Abdulaziz stated to the American Commissioner that the support of the U.S. for this resolution would harm their relations with the Arabs, which would certainly bring them into confrontation, especially on economic issues (Hakeem, 1976: 173; Qasmiyyah, 1999: 80; Harran, 1999: 404). Duce himself acknowledged that U.S. policy on Palestine would ruin its good political and economic position in the Middle East, including its oil concessions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Abu 'Ulayyah and al-Natshah, 1999:147).

## **8.5 The Mutual Saudi-American Security Relationship**

During the 1940s, both Saudi Arabia and the United States felt the need for mutual coordination of security. In the Second World War, the U.S. deployed its forces in Europe and the Far East at the same time. Seeking to establish communications between the two fronts, the U.S. believed that Saudi Arabia could be an important connection between Europe and the Pacific. This was the reason why President Roosevelt had asked King Abdulaziz, during their meeting, for permission to use the Saudi Arabia's eastern ports and emphasised that America required an air force base

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz and Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with them in Jeddah on 31 December 2003 and on 1 January 2004.

in the eastern province (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 258-260; Vassiliev, 1998: 326-327; al-Hummoodi, 1998: 209-210).

When Germany was about to surrender, America's need for an air base in Saudi Arabia, as an intermediate position, increased due to their need to move some of their forces to the Far East against Japan. It could be said that this was the starting point of the American request to obtain a lease for an air force base in al-Dhahran, immediately after the Bitter Lakes meeting. For the Saudi Government, the approval of the construction of the airport meant more American aid and contributions, which would be provided in the form of materials, technical equipment, training for the Saudis and medical services. In addition, it meant, for King Abdulaziz, further American involvement in the region. In May 1945, the King agreed that the U.S. should build al-Dhahran airport (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 258-260; Vassiliev, 1998: 327; al-Hummoodi, 1998: 209-210). After a period of negotiations, an agreement between the two countries was achieved on 6 August 1945 (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 686).

The agreement stated that the airport would be returned, with all its constructions and equipment, to Saudi Arabia as soon as the Second World War ended. However, the Saudi Government acknowledged the American right to use the airport for three years after the end of the War. As a matter of fact, the King, in order to ensure Saudi sovereignty, insisted that it should be part of the agreement that the Saudi flag be raised over the entrance to al-Dhahran, as an indication of his state's independence. This agreement was revised and renewed on 23 June 1949, and again renewed on 18 June 1951,<sup>1</sup> to be valid for five years from that date, with the addition of further articles to suit the interests of the two sides. Among those articles was the acknowledgment by the U.S. of the right of the Saudi Government to practise its full authority inside and outside the airport<sup>2</sup> (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 686; Holden and Johns, 1981:157-158; al-Sumari et al., 1999: 449-459). However, there were some members of the U.S. Congress who were against the establishment of this airport, and some

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp. 303-311.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

politicians in the State Department claimed that the airport was only important for the American war efforts against Japan. Therefore, they assumed that the airport, which would cost America millions of dollars, would cease to be important to American national security once Japan surrendered (Miller, 1980: 138).

Initially, these comments by U.S. politicians made the American Government reluctant to proceed with the building of the airport. However, there were some American officials who believed that al-Dhahran would be important to U.S. interests even after the end of the War for many reasons. It would be at an intermediate position on the route to the Far East even for American civil aviation, in addition to its importance to the American oil concessions in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain (Hoskins, 1954: 272). Also, it would support the Saudi-American relationship and serve the mutual interests of the two countries. They also believed that Saudi-American relations would be harmed if the USA did not keep to its promises to Ibn Saud after he had given his approval. For those reasons, President Harry Truman gave his permission to build al-Dhahran airport on 18 June 1945, and a prompt telegram was sent to the American Ambassador in Jeddah, William Eddy, authorising him to start negotiations with King Abdulaziz (ibid: 138-139).

Due to the great enmity of Saudi Arabia and the United States towards Communism, both countries felt their need for more cooperation against the Communist threat, which was represented by the ambitions of the Soviet Union in the region (Wahbah, 1960: 176; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:276-277; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 776; Vassiliev, 1998: 342). As a result, the United States agreed to provide Saudi Arabia with more economic and military aid. This included American participation in building the Saudi forces, by furnishing them with modern American weapons and training the Saudi officers.<sup>1</sup> Hence, it has been maintained that the U.S. became Saudi Arabia's main supplier of weapons and military instructors after the Second World War (Vassiliev, 1998: 442). Saudi Arabia and the United States adopted similar policies towards the Communist bloc. The Soviet threat in the Middle East and the

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<sup>1</sup> The Saudi Foreign Ministry, *Majmu'at al-Mu'ahadat*, 1922-1951. Pp. 303-311.

Communist movements around Saudi Arabia may have been an important reason for Saudi Arabia and the U.S. to start negotiations with a view to extending the leasing period of the al-Dhahran base in early 1951. This led to the renewal of the Agreement of al-Dhahran for a further five years with more suitable conditions for both sides, as mentioned previously (Hoskins, 1954: 272; Benoist-Mechin, 1965:276-278).

The Saudi-Hashemite rivalry may also have been an important reason behind the Saudi-American cooperation on security matters, which led to the King's acceptance of the need to extend the al-Dhahran Agreement. King Abdulaziz was apprehensive about the ambitions of the Hashemite thrones in Iraq and Jordan as a potential threat. Ibn Saud blamed Britain for supporting the Hashemites' aspirations to rule in the context of the Greater Syria and Fertile Crescent projects, which they would not achieve without the British assistance.<sup>1</sup> The King saw that these aspirations would constitute a real threat to the stability and sovereignty of his state (Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 286-287; Vassiliev, 1998: 330). For this reason, the King tried, with the United States, to influence British policy in order to change its supportive stance towards the Hashemites. On various occasions, he expressed his apprehension to the Americans about potential Hashemite attacks, as a result of his feeling that he could not rely on the British to restrain the Hashemites' ambitions. He felt that only the United States could guarantee his security against the Hashemites (Mcloughlin, 1993: 181).

Indeed, one important aim of Ibn Saud's policy towards the U.S. was clearly to maintain the security of Saudi Arabia against his regional political opponents, who were supported by Britain. This was made clear by his son, Prince Saud, during his official visit to the United States in 1947. King Abdulaziz acknowledged that he needed American political support due essentially to Britain's unfriendly policy of supporting the Hashemites and other political opponents against him in the region (al-Zirikli, 1977a: 774-775). Ibn Saud was keen to influence the American point of view on the proposed project of Greater Syria. Also, he wanted to assure the American

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, FO 371/62112, despatch from Alan Trott, the British Plenipotentiary Minister in Jeddah, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on 4 December 1947.

support in case of any attack against his country. In January 1947, the American Secretary of State, James Byrnes, confirmed to Prince Saud America's full support for the intact unification of the Saudi Arabian territories and its entire political sovereignty against any external threat. This was achieved as a result of Ibn Saud's efforts to maintain the security of his realm, in addition to the Americans' need to secure their interests in Saudi Arabia.

### **8.6 American Development Assistance to Saudi Arabia**

As a result of friendly relations between Saudi Arabia and the USA, a great amount of American assistance was provided to Saudi Arabia in the field of agriculture. In response to an invitation from King Abdulaziz, an American agricultural mission, headed by Twitchell, arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1942. Its task was to conduct soil research and undertake a scientific survey of the water in Saudi Arabia (Twitchell, 1953: 43; Holden and Johns, 1981:143). The American Government sent the required equipment under the Lend-Lease programme. With American assistance, many water wells were drilled in different provinces in Saudi Arabia. The deployment of American funds and modern equipment ensured that cultivated areas were improved (Twitchell, 1953: 43-47; Abu 'Ulayyah, 1997:206-207). In 1951, a Saudi-American programme was started to extend the cultivated area in Saudi Arabia by establishing typical farms and training the people. Also, the programme managed to transform the desert land in order to make it suitable for agriculture (Abu 'Ulayyah, 1997:207). However, the main purpose behind the U.S. support of Saudi agricultural development was to assist the Saudi Government in achieving greater internal stability in this oil-rich country. This would increasingly enable the Americans to retain Ibn Saud's friendship.

Several development plans and projects were accomplished in Saudi Arabia as a result of the Saudi-American friendship. Among those projects was the Trans-

Arabian Pipeline (TAPLINE). It was an important project intended to bring Saudi oil from the Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia to Sidon in Lebanon, on the Mediterranean Sea. This pipeline, which was to be 1,070 miles long, would reduce the distance from the ARAMCO oil fields to the markets in Western Europe by 3,500 miles by shipping oil from Sidon (al-Mukhtar, 1957: 478-491; Twitchell, 1953: 194-195; Longrigg, 1968:206-208; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1295-1299). The Government of Saudi Arabia strongly believed in the importance of this project for its oil exportation, but it was not able to fund it at that time. The immense cost of some \$240,000,000 for this huge project was financed by American companies (Twitchell, 1953: 195; Longrigg, 1968:208; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 1295-1299). Indeed, this project was one of the great projects of the King's reign, which created thousands of work opportunities for the Saudis. The number of Saudis working on this project at one point reached 15,000 (Longrigg, 1968:207). As a matter of fact, TAPLINE was a beneficial project for Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as it crossed their lands (Twitchell, 1953: 194-199-201).

Another important project which was achieved in Saudi Arabia was the rail road between al-Dammam and Riyadh. Al-Dammam was the nearest port to the capital city of Riyadh and many products were imported through its docks. Moreover, the need for a railroad increased as more developments took place in Saudi Arabia, especially in the inland regions, far away from the ports. The idea of the al-Dammam-Riyadh Railway project was conceived in 1946. The first train arrived in Riyadh in 1951, having crossed 357 miles from al-Dammam to the heart of Saudi Arabia, carrying passengers, goods, equipments and oil (Twitchell, 1953: 203-204; al-Zirikli, 1977a: 839-842). The cost of this project was, however, simply too huge for Saudi Arabia to provide alone. Therefore, the Saudi Government asked the American Export-Import Bank (EXIMBANK) for a loan of around £33 million. The American assistance was provided to Saudi Arabia under the fourth clause of the Truman's programme (Vassiliev, 1998: 345).

The friendly political and strong economic relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States were supportive factors on the development of Saudi Arabia through the many projects implemented during King Abdulaziz's reign. It has been maintained

that, since Saudi oil was underpinning Saudi-American relations, all economic, commercial, educational, technological and strategic agreements and understandings between them revolved, in one way or another, around oil (Keohane, 1982: 169; Nakhleh, 1975: 67). However, this was but a part of an American strategic plan to strengthen Saudi Arabia as one of the countries whose security was vital to the United States and the Free World in their struggle against the Communist threat (Hoskins, 1954: 272-274; Benoist-Mechin, 1965: 276; Nakhleh, 1975: 46-47). Indeed, it is difficult to deny that the main objective of United States policy in the Middle East then was to keep the region free of the Soviet threat and of radical political movements (Nakhleh, 1975: 51).



## Conclusions

The study has demonstrated the effective and charismatic leadership of Ibn Saud. Before him, Arabian Peninsula was well known for its political instability and the absolute absence of security, which were indispensable for any form of state building and development. It was Ibn Saud, as a leader, who was able to convince the people of the Arabian Peninsula to follow him and achieve with him their dream of being one people living in one country and ruled by one government. During the expansion of his authority, he emphasized the meaning of brotherhood among his followers (the Ikhwan), so much so that they gave it priority over kinship or loyalty to their tribes. For the first thirty years of his era, Ibn Saud worked to consolidate the political stability and security of his territories, expanding his authority into areas which had never experienced security or peace before. Those lands were lacking in political stability, which resulted in a deteriorating economic and security situation.

Ibn Saud was decisive in dealing with all his political adversaries, in order to establish and maintain the unity of leadership for the entire nation, which then led to the achievement of political integration in the area. This was a direct result of his belief in the importance of these matters for the development of the state and the growth of its economy. The achievement of political stability in Ibn Saud's territories meant the supremacy of law, peace and security, and the growth of the economy. This was the main reason why the people in the other territories looked forward to his protection and support. This was evident from the early welcome he received from the people of Najd, and was even more so in the attitude of those residents of al-Hasa, who wrote to him for years asking for liberation from the Turks, who, in turn, were not able to protect al-Hasa from the constant raids of the surrounding Bedouin tribes.

In the Hail province, which had witnessed instability as a result of disputes within the Royal Family (al-Rasheed), the residents contacted Ibn Saud and requested that the province be brought under his authority. Likewise, the majority of Asir's people wrote to Ibn Saud, on a variety of issues, chief among them the political instability and lack

of security there, asking to become part of his dominion. Similar conditions in al-Hijaz helped to explain the enthusiastic welcome given to Ibn Saud by the majority of the Hijazi people, among whom were highly influential families, including part of the Royal family of al-Sharif. Political instability also forced al-Idreesi, the Governor of Jaizan, to ask Ibn Saud to protect him by putting Jaizan under his protection, due to the growing threat posed by Imam Yahia of Yemen. Thus, while each region of the Arabian Peninsula had its particular features that led to its conquest by Ibn Saud, the essential common factor that led to conquest was the lack of security and political instability.

In 1932, Ibn Saud's state was politically established as a single political entity with one national identity under the name of the "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". By this act, Ibn Saud achieved the first united state to consist of most of the Arabian Peninsula, which had witnessed disputes for centuries and had never been a long-lasting single political entity before. This disunity was due to many factors, among which was the isolation of the Peninsula and the absence of an effective leadership in it. As he was now the leader of a stable country with a distinctive national identity, Ibn Saud, having learned from his early contacts with Britain and Turkey, was ready to establish direct relationships with the international community and lay the foundations for Saudi international relations for the first time. Before him, most of the Saudi regions had no previous contact with the outside world. They had never been colonised, and indeed had never been subjected to any kind of foreign power. This was a great advantage to the Saudi State in formulating and implementing its foreign policy. Moreover, because it had never been colonised, Saudi Arabia was able to retain the purity of its culture and to keep its authentic Arabian and Islamic political identity.

The study has also illustrated how greatly Saudi Arabia had suffered during its establishment, from a lack of political structures and an absence of governmental institutions, due to isolation and lack of direct contact with other nations. At this time, Saudi Arabia was deficient in most areas of governmental and administrative organisations (except in al-Hijaz) due to its isolation and the absence of the institutions characteristic of a modern state. This lack of political structures and

governmental institutions constituted a complex problem during the early stages of the emergence of Saudi Arabia. The study illustrated King Abdulaziz's great achievement in this regard, as he gradually overcame this problem by welcoming many Arab experts in political and administrative matters. He attracted them by giving them his support, protection and generous rewards. He also gave them the opportunity of promotion to the highest positions and granted Saudi nationality to anyone who asked for it, despite the opposition of those among his own people who did not share his idea of seeking the help of non-Saudis.

With the inclusion of al-Hijaz, Ibn Saud's state reached the maximum expansion possible in the political circumstances then prevailing. Hence, he felt the need to develop and modernise the state. The study has shed light on the methods employed by King Abdulaziz to improve the Hijazi governmental institutions and regulations according to modern concepts, and indicated how many institutions and regulations were established or improved in the new Kingdom, such as the Consultative Council, the Judicial System, the Police Authority and the Finance Department. Most departments were upgraded to ministries during his era. With regard to his foreign policy and international relations, upon being recognised by the international community, he developed his foreign policy apparatus and created the institutions which would organize and administer these affairs. This was done by establishing a Political Committee and a Department of Foreign Affairs, which was upgraded, in 1930, to a Foreign Ministry.

The study also demonstrated the decisive role of Ibn Saud when he insisted on vanquishing any internal opposition to the modernisation and development of his people and state. In internal affairs, Ibn Saud confronted the elites who had political ambitions or were, for various reasons, antipathetic to his modern concept of the state. There were many opponents to Ibn Saud's foreign policy and his contacts with the international community, as they were against development and modernisation. Amongst these opponents were some religious and tribal leaders who were influential military leaders in Ibn Saud's army. Some of these rivals led a military revolt against him although they had provided indispensable military support when he was building

his state. They demanded that he maintain the Peninsula's isolation from the international community and break all contact even with Arab and Muslim states which practised Islamic teachings they considered unacceptable.

For much the same reason, the rebels also rejected the introduction of modern technology and scientific innovations. In addition, they demanded unlimited expansion, which would have involved Ibn Saud in military and political disputes with the Great Powers, especially Britain and France. As a prudent and judicious leader, Ibn Saud knew that any conflict with those powers would have been beyond his political, economic and military capabilities. Such a conflict would have cost him dear and could have led to the loss of all he had achieved thus far. Furthermore, he was involved in treaties with those powers which he wanted to maintain and respect. Those who opposed him were not able to recognize these realities as Ibn Saud did, because they lacked his knowledge of external affairs and his skilful leadership. For Ibn Saud, the options were complicated. He had to decide between two alternatives: to go ahead with his plans to develop his newly emerging state and to establish its relations with the international community through a foreign policy that would place the country in the position it deserved, or to yield to the demands of his adversaries.

The study showed that the revolts by the rebellious Ikhwan, Ibn Rifadah and Idreesi, which had external support and funding, were unable to change Ibn Saud's policy or to end his ambition of building and developing his state. If he had agreed to a compromise, he would have been compelled to sever all ties with the international community. However, King Abdulaziz, with his charismatic and influential leadership, chose to implement his plan and go forward to achieve his goals by putting the interests of his state and the majority of his people before any other option. He accomplished his great ambitions, strengthened by his faith in God, by his strong belief in his principles and by the trust of his faithful people, who gave him their unlimited loyalty and support. If Ibn Saud had yielded to his adversaries' demands, Saudi Arabia would not have become what it is today, a modern and stable country.

In the early 1930s, after King Abdulaziz had succeeded in overcoming his rivals, the time was suitable for adopting a more flexible and a broader identity than the narrow Ikhwan identity, which was limited to the people of Najd and some other zealots in neighbouring regions. It was necessary to abandon the Ikhwan identity for a wider and more comprehensive identity, which would unite the people of all provinces, including those who followed different Islamic teachings and creeds. This eventually allowed Saudi Arabia to achieve further development and establish more healthy relations with the international community. However, as a result of his success in dealing with troublesome internal factors, King Abdulaziz was able to adopt a foreign policy and establish his international relations, in ways that suited the interests of his state.

The study has indicated how the integration of the Saudi national community was achieved, which was a long and difficult task for King Abdulaziz. He worked tirelessly to establish the Saudi national identity and dedicated his life to the development of the Saudi community. It was apparent that he overcame many obstacles during his arduous mission towards the unification of his people behind his leadership as one community. This enabled Saudi Arabia to relate to the international community through an influential and cohesive foreign policy.

It has been illustrated in this study that, in order to establish constructive relations with the international community, Saudi Arabia as well as other newly established states should overcome several problems. These problems include the establishment of a national identity for the newly emerging state; the building of a political structure and foreign policy institutions; the acquisition of an influential leadership; the achievement of political stability; the possession of adequate economic resources; the handling of colonial legacies; and the attainment of national security. It is true that, Saudi Arabia and each of the other newly established states had their own particular characteristics which distinguish them from other states, but the factors enumerated above would have an impact, in one way or another, on all newly emerging states. However, each factor would have its impact on a new state in accordance with its

special circumstances. Saudi Arabia has been a good example of a newly emerging state which successfully dealt with the negative and positive sides of these factors.

The freedom Ibn Saud displayed in his foreign policy was evident in his dealings with the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula. It also characterised his relations with the Gulf Shaikhdoms, which were protected by Britain. This study illustrated the tenacity with which Ibn Saud fought to secure his state's interests even when this led to his becoming embroiled in a military conflict with Britain, which was acting on behalf of its protectorates. It has also been demonstrated that tribal and territorial factors had led to several border disputes with most of his neighbours.

King Abdulaziz also exercised great freedom in his policy towards Arab affairs. With regard to Palestine, which was (and still is) the most important unresolved regional issue in the eyes of Arabs and Muslims, he was in conflict with Britain as a Mandatory Power, especially when he lost his faith in the credibility of Britain due to its perceived unlimited support for the Zionists. In fact, Palestine was an essential factor in Ibn Saud's relations with foreign powers generally, and with Britain and the United States in particular. He persisted in his principled support for the Palestinians and in the strong hope that eventually a peaceful settlement would be achieved. The establishment and conduct of his relations with other Arab countries, such as Egypt, Trans-Jordan and Iraq, were also characterised by a remarkable degree of freedom. His relations with them were undertaken for the benefit of Arab causes, although they were still subjected to colonial influences. Indeed, the isolation of Saudi Arabia was a major factor that led to the Saudi foreign policy being free from the influence of the Great Powers, which allowed Ibn Saud to pursue a supportive foreign policy towards the Arab liberation movements against the domination of the colonial powers.

In addition to its new identity as a modern state, Saudi Arabia maintained its Arab and Islamic identity in its international relations and foreign policy. It has been made clear from the study that Ibn Saud's foreign policy emerged from his principles, which were grounded in Arab and Islamic values and traditions, and from his influence as leader of a state which always insisted on fulfilling the duties imposed by

its Arab and Islamic identity. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia welcomed all the Muslim states and organizations which asked for political relations with the Kingdom or for help against their colonial masters. Ibn Saud's stance towards the colonial powers was unwavering: he opposed them and refused to play by their rules or submit to their influence. This was demonstrated by his refusal to join the League of Nations in the 1930s. Ibn Saud knew that he was the leader of a stable state, which had built influential relations with the states and organizations of the international community. Also, he believed that his state should use its strong economy and rich oil resources to benefit and support Arab and Muslim causes. The King's freedom in his policy towards Arab and Muslim affairs was further demonstrated in the many treaties and agreements which he signed with many of the Arab and Muslim states and organizations.

Ibn Saud was careful not to become involved in restrictive treaties as others had done, and as a consequence of which they lost the freedom to conduct their foreign affairs as they had wished. In fact, he never involved himself in any treaty or agreement that would degrade the Saudi sovereignty, except for the Treaty of Darin in 1915. Nonetheless, this treaty did not last for long as he insisted on abrogating it through the Treaty of Jeddah in 1927, when he was about to establish his state's relationship with Britain. Ibn Saud's foreign policy towards Britain, as the most influential power in the region at that time, was the strongest evidence of Ibn Saud's determination to assert his state's independence in the making of foreign policy. This was strongly evident in his decision to grant an oil concession to an American company despite the existence of a strong Saudi-British friendship.

Ibn Saud always experienced British pressure with regard to the country's position on some regional and international issues. Among those issues were Ibn Saud's boundary disputes with Britain regarding its Protectorates in the Gulf, which were regarded by him to have been fully or partly under the rule of his ancestors in the past. Furthermore, he was in political conflict with the British policy on Palestine. Also, Ibn Saud and Britain were always in dispute with regard to the British policy towards the Saudi-Hashemite rivalry. Maintaining national security against any potential

external threat was one of Ibn Saud's most important concerns. The integrity of his territories and the state's national security were the main reasons for his policy against any kind of Arab integration, especially those proposed by Britain, which were seen as benefiting the Hashemites. Ibn Saud's policy was illustrated by his attitude towards the Hashemites and the projects of Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent. In fact, it could be said that Britain's policy towards Ibn Saud and the Middle East in general, with which Ibn Saud strongly disagreed, was the main impetus behind his looking for better and stronger relations with other powers with the aim of self-protection. Although there were many political disputes with Britain, Ibn Saud avoided any military conflict, which he knew would be beyond his capability to cope with.

King Abdulaziz was an astute realist, who knew when to bend to political pressures. Well aware of the prevailing political circumstances, he knew well how not to expose all his great achievements to military threats. Unfortunately, Ibn Saud's apprehension of military dispute with Britain became a reality when Britain invaded al-Buraimi on behalf of Oman and Abu Dhabi. However, this happened under more advantageous international circumstances. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Ibn Saud had, by then, consolidated his political position. He was one of the most influential Arab and Muslim leaders. Also, he was the King of a state which had good and constructive relationships with most of the international community and organizations as a member of the UN. Also, his state had strong economic and mutual commercial relations with many influential powers, including the U.S., which would have helped him in terms of protecting mutual interests. However, during al-Buraimi dispute with Britain, which directly threatened Saudi Arabia's national security, the U.S. Government's posture was neutral.

Furthermore, the British influence and hegemony in the Gulf, started to decline after World War Two, partly as a result of the augmenting American influence and interests in the region. Ibn Saud was confident that the U.S. would act according to its interests, and that if dispute with Britain escalated to the point of threatening his



state's sovereignty, the U.S. would support him.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, he threatened to refer his problem to the UN, with the confidence that he would be politically supported by the international community. However, Ibn Saud died in 1953, at the climax of his rage against the British policy in al-Buraimi due to the fact that this part of his country was occupied by Britain. Ibn Saud was provoked to engage in a military conflict with the British after he had tried to avoid it for many years, but he was forced to engage in it due to the direct military threat to his national security. Indeed, the death of Ibn Saud would not allow us to envisage how he would have acted against Britain, as the British threat greatly escalated from mere political disputes into a full-scale military attack on his territory.

Ibn Saud's ambition to build and develop his state was frustrated by the only obstacle which he had been unable to overcome: the Kingdom's lack of economic resources before the discovery of oil. He strongly believed that he ought to rely on his own economic resources. He also knew that he would not be able to accomplish this without the support of the developed countries, which had the necessary technology and experience. He started to offer concessions in his territories to foreign powers and companies. To attract them, he offered large areas of land and full protection for their enterprises. At first, these companies were reluctant for many reasons, prominent among was the factor of political instability. When Ibn Saud accomplished and maintained political stability in his state, the circumstances became more suitable for those companies to gain concessions in Ibn Saud's land. It was now in Ibn Saud's power to select the offer that would suit him best. The most important consideration for the King was to maintain his full independence and to avoid any restrictive treaties. He insisted that the only kind of concessions that would be given by his state would be based on mutual interest and economic benefits for both. He also insisted on being provided with substantial loans in advance as part of the concessionary agreement in order to use those loans to build his state.

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<sup>1</sup> This was supported by Bakur al-'Amri during my interview with him in Jeddah on 2 January 2004.

Ibn Saud decided to grant an oil concession in his territories to the Americans due to many reasons. The U.S. Government's support for the right of nations to self-determination was a major reason for Ibn Saud's preference for the American offer, even though it was not the best in purely economic terms. Although there was no direct colonial or imperialist policy that had been practised on Ibn Saud or his territories, he detested imperialism and always opposed it. Therefore, he was very cautious regarding the influence of the imperial powers and was unwilling to grant them concessions. In addition, the American companies were relatively free from the interference of their government in comparison with the others. Indeed, Ibn Saud's apprehensions about his national security and political stability were major factors behind his move to improve his relations with the U.S. However, granting the oil concession to SOCAL had a negative impact on Saudi-British relations.

The study also illustrated that the oil concession was the only way to entice the United States into the region in order to reduce the influence of Britain. Indeed, early Saudi-American relations were limited to the economic sphere. In fact, these relations were with American companies and remained so for many years, even after the exchange of diplomatic representation between the two countries. Furthermore, the Saudi-American economic relations started even before the American recognition of Ibn Saud. However, the increasing interests of American companies in Saudi Arabia forced them to put pressure on successive U.S. Governments to improve relations with Saudi Arabia in order to protect American interests from Britain. With time, Saudi-American relations improved until the United States became the first Saudi Arabian trading partner as a result of mutual interests, especially during and after the Second World War. In the end, the United States became a major foreign player in Middle Eastern issues.

The importance of this relationship was clearly demonstrated during the Saudi-American Summit between King Abdulaziz and President Franklin Roosevelt in 1945. During this Summit, Saudi-American relations were consolidated further through the extension of the oil concession period and of Saudi-American military cooperation. Ibn Saud agreed to let the Americans use the eastern Saudi ports and to

lease to them an airport site in al-Dhahran for use against the Axis forces. However, he insisted on the condition that Saudi Arabia should, under no circumstances, be occupied and that no part of its territory should be alienated. This was to ensure that Saudi national security was not threatened by the conflict between the Great Powers. By doing so, he felt that he was securing his safety in the face of his enemies, which were supported by Britain, and also against the Communist threat. He believed that the United States, at least, had no imperial ambitions which might threaten his national security.

In addition to his need for strong allies against some Great Powers regarding Saudi national security, Ibn Saud was in desperate need of American technology. At the same time the Americans were more enthusiastic than others in providing their support and thus gaining a strong ally in the region, who became vital to the security of their interests there later on. The Americans provided aid to Ibn Saud through many loans, in accordance with the lend-lease programme, and became the first country to develop Saudi Arabia, including its army. This was chiefly due to the apprehensions of both states regarding the growing threat posed by the USSR. However, due to his constant unease regarding the influence of Great Powers on his national security, Ibn Saud preferred to deal with the American banks and companies rather than through direct contact with the United States Government. Even when he agreed to enter into military cooperation with the Americans, such as leasing al-Dhahran airport, he insisted that this cooperation should be restricted to a specific period and particular circumstances.

This study showed that the strong Saudi economy, resulting from the discovery of huge oil reserves, played a significant role in Saudi foreign policy, and enabled Saudi Arabia to play a more influential role on regional and international levels. The economic factor was one of the major factors that led to most of Saudi Arabia's territorial disputes with its neighbours over oil-rich boundary areas.

The study also showed that when Ibn Saud died in September 1953, he left behind him a solid political entity with a distinct national identity. Saudi Arabia had become

one of the richest countries in the world due to its huge oil reserves. Ibn Saud left a great political legacy, which his successors benefited from by adhering to his principles in general and to his foreign policy in particular. They followed his legacy in strictly maintaining Saudi political stability and national security. This was illustrated by the Saudi attitude during al-Wadi'ah dispute with South Yemen in 1969, and towards Iraq in 1990.

Also, Ibn Saud's successors consolidated his policy of friendship towards the Gulf States, which led to the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981. They also followed his Arab and Muslim political legacy. However, the Saudi Islamic foreign policy, after King Faisal ascended the throne in 1964, was improved in order to serve Saudi interests through the establishment of the Muslim World League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Saudi Arabia practised more influential policy, resulting from its strong economy. Moreover, Saudi Arabia maintained Ibn Saud's stance against Zionism and continued its unlimited support for the Palestinians. At the same time, it continued its attempts to find a peaceful solution to this problem as Ibn Saud had always hoped. Also, Ibn Saud's sons continued his policy of adamant opposition to those states which had adopted Communism. They worked against the Communist bloc and all its propagations and policies in the Middle East and the entire Muslim world. The Saudi hatred of the atheists was a sanctified legacy of Ibn Saud. In fact, Saudi policy towards the Communists was also a result of their increasing threats in the Middle East and against Saudi Arabia in particular.

Ibn Saud's successors also followed his policy of strengthening their political and economic relations with the Free World. This policy resulted from their belief that strong relations, especially in the economic field, with the Free World would make Saudi stability very important to those countries. Indeed, this was true. During the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988, the international community became alarmed by the severe threat to the security of the Gulf countries. This was confirmed more in 1990, by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the imminent threat to Saudi Arabia. The Free World responded quickly to the Saudi request to maintain its national security and

liberate Kuwait. In fact, the quick international response, headed by the U.S., was a clear result of Ibn Saud's old policy and the consolidation of this policy by his sons. The attitude of the international community against the danger posed by Iraq to Saudi Arabia was a clear example of international cooperation for the purpose of maintaining mutual interests.

Although Saudi Arabia, during the war against Iraq in 1990-1991, requested international military support to liberate Kuwait and protect Saudi national security, it maintained its old policy of refraining from involvement in protective or restrictive treaties. Saudi Arabia agreed only on cooperation and exchanging political, economic and military support. The Kingdom agreed on using its territories only to defeat the Iraqi army and liberate Kuwait, under the condition that all foreign troops should leave when the Saudis asked them to do so. After the liberation of Kuwait, the coalition forces left Saudi Arabia, except for several thousand U.S. troops, which remained there with full Saudi acceptance, due to the Saudi need. However, the American military presence in Saudi Arabia was ended in September 2003, when American troops moved out to al-'Udayd Base in Qatar.<sup>1</sup>

The loyalty of King Abdulaziz's successors to his legacy did not mean that there were no changes at all. In fact, there were some major changes to Saudi policy regarding a number of political issues. For example, Saudi policy towards the ending of the enmity with the Hashemites has been modified. Furthermore, being convinced of the necessity for Arab and Muslim solidarity against Communism and Zionism, Saudi Arabia, under King Faisal, felt that all efforts should be aimed against those threats. In order to achieve this, Saudi Arabia worked to end all its boundary disputes with its neighbouring states, even if that meant giving up part of its territories to its neighbours, as it did with the United Arab Emirates and Oman over al-Buraimi in 1974. Believing that it should play a leading role in Arab and Muslim affairs, the Saudi leadership placed Arab and Muslim interests above its own self-interests.

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<sup>1</sup><http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F6061EFA355E0C718EDDA00894DB404482>; <http://www.almokhtsar.com/html/news/1424/07/27/1/10898.php>.

These changes in Saudi attitude were good indicators of the flexibility of its foreign policy on major international issues. They illustrated the acceptance by the Saudi political leadership of the principle of development and progress. Therefore, and due to major events, such as the establishment of the European Union and the disintegration of the USSR and the subsequent abandonment of their old ideology by the former Communist states, important changes in Saudi foreign policy were adopted. Among these changes was the strengthening of Saudi relations with states such as the Russian Federation, Ukraine and China. Saudi relations with such countries have witnessed real diplomatic, economic and technological cooperation. Of course, this improvement in Saudi foreign policy ought to be seen within the general framework of King Abdulaziz's political legacy.

It has been clearly shown how King Abdulaziz's personal leadership played a dominant role in the making and implementation of Saudi foreign policy over the period under study. It has also been demonstrated how King Abdulaziz was the ultimate decision maker in the foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia, and never allowed any intrusion from anyone, even those who were closely related to him, such as his brothers or sons. He was decisive in maintaining the unity of leadership, which led to the elimination of the rivals who intervened in his affairs, especially on foreign issues. This was shown through his policy towards the rebel Ikhwan leaders. Also, although he welcomed many advisors to Saudi Arabia, this study has shown that these advisors were never directly involved in policy making.

It became clear from this study that King Abdulaziz was an appropriate leader for Saudi Arabia, as a newly-emerging state at that time. Such leadership was a vital factor for the people of the Peninsula to rely on rather than follow contradictory and less-discerning rivals. Without an influential charismatic leadership, such as that of King Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia as a political entity would have remained a dream buried under the sands of the Arabian Peninsula.

Guided by a set of research questions, this study has attempted to provide a better understanding of the process of Saudi foreign policy making under King Abdulaziz. It

has thrown light on the problems experienced by Saudi Arabia as a newly-emerging state while making and implementing its foreign policy. These problems have been variously shared by other newly-emerging states. It hoped that this study would advance knowledge about, not only the Saudi case, but also the cases of other newly established states.

Although several studies have been carried out on Saudi foreign policy, most have covered either earlier or more modern periods or only part of King Abdulaziz's era. Furthermore, other studies have focused only on Saudi bi-lateral relations with specific countries. This study has dealt with the entire period of King Abdulaziz. In this way, the work would hopefully make a modest contribution to the existing literature on Saudi foreign policy making during the period under study.

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## **Interviews:**

**His Highness Prince Abdulrahman Ibn Abdullah.** In Riyadh, on 7-10 January 2004. Prince Abdulrahman is a nephew of King Abdulaziz and a senior member of the Saudi Royal Family. The Prince is the son of Prince Abdullah, who was one of the princes closest to the King and was one of the most prominent members of the Political Committee; this enabled his son to gain detailed knowledge of Saudi policy making. Prince Abdulrahman, like his father, is well known for his wisdom and wide knowledge. Therefore, he is considered to be an extremely reliable source of information about the history of the Saudi Royal Family.

**His Royal Highness Prince Mamduh Ibn Abdulaziz.** In Jeddah, 31 December 2003- 1 January 2004. Prince Mamduh is the Head of the Saudi Centre for Strategic Studies. He was the Governor of Tabuk province until 1993, when he was appointed to his present position. He is well known for his strong moral principles and exemplary religious behaviour. He also has a wide knowledge of Saudi internal and external affairs. This is due to his close and strong relationship with his older brothers who were, and are still, charged with formulating and implementing Saudi policy by virtue of their influential positions. Also, he is well known for his great modesty and the easy and direct access to his court, which attracts the intellectual and educated elites.

**Shaikh Ahmad al-Mubarak.** In Riyadh, on 17 January 2004. Shaikh Ahmad represented his country, Saudi Arabia, as an Ambassador to several countries before his retirement in 1995. His last position was as Saudi Ambassador to Qatar. During King Abdulaziz's reign he was the Director of Education in Jeddah. He is one of the notables of al-Hasa province. Furthermore, he is well known for his great knowledge of religious, historical and political affairs.

**Dr. Abdulaziz al-Khuwaiter.** In Riyadh, on 19 January 2004. Al-Khuwaiter is the Saudi Minister of State and a member of the Saudi Council of Ministers. He was the formerly the Minister of Education and served his country and his government in many official and influential positions for many years. Also, he is commonly known for his strong relationships with the influential members of the Saudi Royal Family, mainly King Fahd. Furthermore, al-Khuwaiter is highly regarded as the author of several published books and articles about King Abdulaziz and Saudi affairs.

**Prof. Bakur al-'Amri.** In Jeddah, 31 December 2003- 2 January 2004. Al-'Amri was formerly Dean of the Faculty of Economy and Administration in King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. He also was also Professor of Political Sciences in the same university. He is now the Head of the Customs Appellate Court in Makkah Province. When I met him, I found his vast knowledge of Saudi affairs and foreign policy-making extremely valuable for my study.

**Dr. Lateefah al-Salloom.** In Riyadh, on 11 January 2004. Al-Salloom is the Delegate Member to the Assessment Centre for Girls' Colleges, in the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She is well known for the energy and commitment with which she serves her people and her country. Also, she is the author of several published books and articles about King Abdulaziz and Saudi Arabia in general. Indeed, she is an outstanding example of the highly educated and socially active Saudi woman.

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