

In ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

Foreign Policy & Defense **67** // Politics & Government **70** // Economics, Labor & Business **72** // Society **75** // Press & Media **76** // History **77** // Religion & Philosophy **81** // Science & Technology **82** // Arts & Letters **84** // Other Nations **86**

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Goodbye to All That

THE SOURCE: “The King and Us” by David Ottaway, in *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2009.

THE “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP” between Saudi Arabia and the United States that began in 1945 died in the ashes of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, writes David Ottaway, senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and author of *The King’s Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America’s Tangled Relationship With Saudi Arabia* (2008). Today, Washington and Riyadh retreat into the special correctness of diplomatic-speak when they refer to their relationship. They call it a “strategic dialogue.”

Fifteen of the 19 hijackers who carried out the 9/11 attacks were Saudis. Mastermind Osama bin Laden is the 17th son of one of the kingdom’s most successful businessmen, and the largest contingent of “enemy combatants” scooped up on the battlefields of Afghanistan is of Saudi nationality.

Withering criticism of the Saudi royal family has caused it to almost entirely reverse its view of the United States since 9/11—from primary source of security to major cause of insecurity. King Abdullah shuns the role of “moderate ally” in the struggle against Iran, and is busy building ties to Europe, China, Russia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Even before the attacks on the

World Trade Center, Crown Prince Abdullah, who became king in 2005, was angry over America’s indifference to the Middle East peace process. In 2002 he proposed that the Arab world normalize relations with Israel in return for an independent Palestinian state and a return to the pre-1967 Israeli borders, but President George W. Bush “did nothing” until a belated and unsuccessful 2007 conference, Ottaway writes. Moreover, the American invasion of Iraq installed a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad, tipping the balance of power in the Middle East toward



President Barack Obama and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah met for the first time in April.

majority-Shiite Iran and away from Sunni Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia.

The traditional quid pro quo—American security guarantees for Saudi oil—no longer works for either side. It's been five years since Saudi Arabia could significantly influence oil prices. When Riyadh boosts production in an effort to lower prices, or pumps less oil to try to prevent a global price collapse, it fails. Another potential difficulty is the uncertainty of the nation's future leadership. Abdullah is 86 years old, and his designated successor is 85 and suffering from cancer. The king has established a council of his 35 half-brothers and their sons to select his heir, but the council is untested.

Even so, the United States and the kingdom retain common interests: Saudi Arabia has more oil than any other state, and America uses more. Both face threats from Al Qaeda and want to thwart Iran's nuclear and political ambitions. And the two nations expect each other to help solve the world's economic crisis. They manage to cooperate on counterterrorism, to hold joint military exercises, and to educate thousands of Saudis in American universities. They share the goal of stability in Pakistan and the Middle East, but the Saudis regard the buildup of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan as foolhardy.

The Obama administration, Ottaway writes, should seek cooperation where it can, and, in particular, strive for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to restore Arab trust. The Saudis seek a quick U.S. economic recovery to

boost a depressed world economy and create a market for more oil. Putting their money where their mouth is, they have loyally supported the American dollar against pressure from other Arab states to calculate oil payments in other currencies. In this instance, their faith has been vindicated, Ottaway says. Other nations—even powerful China—have sought a safe harbor amid the economic crisis by buying more U.S. Treasury bonds.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Terror Intelligence

THE SOURCE: "The 9/11 Attacks—A Study of Al Qaeda's Use of Intelligence and Counterintelligence" by Gaetano Joe Ilardi, in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, March 2009.

FOR MANY AMERICANS, AL Qaeda's slaughter of nearly 3,000 innocent people on 9/11 epitomizes irrationality, fanaticism, and madness. But, in fact, the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington in 2001 were slowly and meticulously planned over five or more years, then trained for, practiced, tested, and subjected to modified dry runs, notes Gaetano Joe Ilardi, a police officer and postdoctoral researcher at Monash University in the Australian state of Victoria.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, mastermind of the 9/11 plot, cultivated expertise in an array of terrorism techniques, from car and aircraft bombing to political assassination and reservoir poisoning. When he briefed Osama

bin Laden in mid-1996 on his scheme to crash planes into buildings in the United States, bin Laden was initially noncommittal, apparently because he thought the plan was too complicated. But two years later, he was sold.

Within months, Khalid began collecting intelligence, Ilardi writes. Initially, he scanned aviation magazines and airline timetables, acquired flight simulator software, and watched hijacking movie thrillers. Soon, newly recruited suicide operatives were taking a short course on how to conduct reconnaissance. They cased planes they intended to hijack, sitting in first class to observe the cockpit doors, to see whether the captain entered the cabin during the flights, and to record the movements of the crew. One hijacker tried to hitch a ride in a cockpit jump seat by claiming that he was about to go to work for Egypt Air. He was kicked out when the crew realized he was lying; he failed in a second attempt to get inside the cockpit on the pretext of needing to retrieve a pen he had left behind. Multiple tests convinced the hijackers that the cockpit doors would be opened between 10 and 15 minutes into each flight. That allowed terrorists on different planes to gain access to the cockpit at approximately the same time.

In a test of potential weapons to gain control of the airplanes, a hijacker carried a box cutter into the cabin in his toiletries bag, then observed that when he took it out of his hand luggage, nobody paid