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# SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS

  

## AFTER 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

It may be no exaggeration to note that, after the United States, Saudi Arabia was the country most directly affected by the tragic events of 11 September 2001. The presumed mastermind behind the perpetrators was Saudi-born Usamah bin Ladin and 15 of the 19 hijackers of the airliners involved were thought to be Saudis. In the initial months following the strikes, the kingdom found itself under a barrage of verbal attacks by American commentators and there were real fears of severe damage to Saudi-American relations. The damage caused to Saudi society – by the abrupt discovery of the extent to which extremism subsisted within and, amongst the educated at least, by the shock of the vitriolic attacks from outside – will be deeper and require longer to assess.

### ***Saudi Involvement with Usamah bin Ladin, the Taliban, and the 11 September Hijackers***

**Usamah bin Ladin and the Aftermath of 11 September.** Usamah bin Ladin was one of many children of Muhammad bin Ladin, who had been born in the Hadramawt region of Yemen but emigrated to Jiddah, where he gradually built up a construction business that eventually became Saudi Arabia's largest. Born about 1958 as the 17<sup>th</sup> of his father's reputed 50 or more children and of a Syrian mother,

Usamah received an education in civil engineering at the university level inside the kingdom but does not seem to have played a major role in the family business.<sup>1</sup> With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he helped fund-raising activities in Pakistan and then joined the Afghani *mujahidin* to fight against the Soviet-backed government.

The *mujahidin* were backed in their eventually successful campaign to drive the Soviets out by the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Following the end of the fighting, the picture became increasingly murky. The *mujahidin* coalition splintered; heavy fighting between factions became widespread and prolonged, dooming the unstable government to failure in resisting the new Taliban movement. Meanwhile, many of the foreign fighters returned to their home countries. The Arabs among them became known as 'Arab Afghans' and remained alienated from their societies and imbued with radical religion-based ideology. Usamah bin Ladin was among them. His extremist views were anathema to the Saudi government, which withheld his passport during 1989-1991, and in 1991 he found it expedient to move on to Sudan, where he supported the Islamist government dominated by Hasan al-Turabi and established a number of businesses. His activities there led the Saudi government in 1994 to revoke his citizenship and freeze his assets in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, he established the Committee for Advice and Reform in London, which seems to have cooperated with the more moderate Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR; see below) in criticising the Saudi régime.<sup>2</sup>

American and Saudi pressure on the government of Sudan forced Usamah to relocate to Afghanistan in 1996. By this time, the tentacles of his al-Qa'idah movement appear to have stretched to a number of countries, notably Egypt and Yemen as well as Saudi Arabia. Although the specifics are hazy, Usamah seems to have had close ties with the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army in southern Yemen, which kidnapped a group of tourists in December 1998. A number of their captives were killed in a firefight with Yemeni soldiers and the head of the 'army' was tried in Yemeni courts, convicted and executed. But adherents, many of them 'Arab Afghans', remained at large in remote areas of the country. It is widely thought that some of them, in conjunction with Usamah bin Ladin, were responsible for the bomb attack on the American naval vessel, the USS Cole, in Aden harbour in September 2000. The four Saudis executed for the November 1995 bombing of a building in Riyadh used by an American training team for the Saudi Arabian National Guard, killing five Americans and two Indians, claimed to be influenced by Muhammad al-Mas'ari and Usamah bin Ladin.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from the 11 September hijackings that Usamah had acquired a number of Saudi adherents, as some 15 of the 19 hijackers apparently were of Saudi nationality. A significant number of the Saudis involved came from the southern and western regions of the kingdom, areas that traditionally have nursed grievances against the central region of Najd, home of the ruling Al Sa'ud family, and have benefited relatively less from oil income.<sup>4</sup> In addition, at least 45 Saudis were killed in the 2001 war in Afghanistan<sup>5</sup> and at least 240 more Saudis were captured.<sup>6</sup> The number of Saudis recruited by al-Qa'idah to defend Islam in what were regarded as 'just wars' is not an indication of the Saudi government's passivity but rather a failure of its intelligence and of its judgment in assigning low priority to this problem.

**Saudi Arabia and Islamic Extremism** The great majority of Saudis are Muwahhidun, better known in the West as Wahhabis.<sup>7</sup> The movement was founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by religious reformer

Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab, who preached a return to the original austerity and purity of Islam. He also formed an alliance with the head of the Al Sa'ud clan, which led to the extension of Al Sa'ud power over much of the Arabian Peninsula with the aim of spreading the Wahhabi message. The task of cementing Al Sa'ud control over the present territory of the kingdom fell to King 'Abd al-'Aziz (often known in the West as 'Ibn Sa'ud') in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early years of this process, 'Abd al-'Aziz relied for much of his military force upon the Ikhwan, groups of Najdi tribesmen imbued with a strong sense of Wahhabi duty.

Forced to recognise the limits to expansion posed to the north by the British mandates of Transjordan and Iraq and to the east by the British-protected emirates of the Gulf, King 'Abd al-'Aziz was forced to abandon his strategy of spreading the reach of Wahhabism and to concentrate instead on forging an emerging nation-state – a change of outlook not much different than the decision of the young Soviet movement in Russia to regard itself as a state first and an expansionist ideology second. But 'Abd al-'Aziz's change of strategy brought him into direct conflict with the ultra-conservative wing of Wahhabism and the Ikhwan. Although he faced off the Ikhwan and forced them to bow to his will, the seeds were sown for the continuing tension between the state under Al Sa'ud leadership and strict interpreters of the Wahhabi message. The persistence of the fanaticism of the Ikhwan was demonstrated in 1979 when a neo-Ikhwan group led by Juhayman al-'Utaybah seized control of the Great Mosque of Makkah.<sup>8</sup>

It is one of the enduring myths of Western critics of Saudi Arabia that the Al Sa'ud and the Saudi state are unidimensionally arch-conservative and reactionary. On the contrary, the successors of King 'Abd al-'Aziz continue to walk a tightrope between respecting tradition and pursuing development. They have been forced to tread warily and slowly in introducing such innovations as radio, television, and mass education. In 1965, the erection of a television transmitter in Riyadh provoked a demonstration which the police dispersed but several were killed. Ten years later, the brother of one of those killed (and a member of the ruling family) assassinated King Faysal. In another example, the state eventually reached agreement with the '*ulama*' (the religious establishment) that girls should be educated – but control of female education was placed in the hands of the '*ulama*' through the General Presidency for Girls' Education.<sup>9</sup> The price King Fahd paid for grudging acceptance of his pursuit of development was the appointment of an arch-conservative, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz, as Mufti, a position signifying the highest religious authority in the country, in a game of give-and-take.

But in tandem with a recrudescence of traditional Wahhabi opposition to change in the kingdom, as represented by those who took over the Great Mosque, other neo-traditionalist religious opposition began to appear in the 1970s. These Salafiyah, a term denoting desire to return to the golden age of the Prophet Muhammad, not only dismissed the Saudi state as corrupt and un-Islamic and opposed the Western presence in Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world, but also regarded the official religious establishment as a co-opted, and thus illegitimate, tool of the state. In the 1980s, this opposition included figures such as Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Sulayman al-Mas'ari, founder of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (more accurately translated as the Committee for the Defence of Shari'ah [Islamic law] Rights), and his son Muhammad, who represented the CDLR in exile in London along Sa'd al-Faqih before the two quarrelled and split. In the 1990s, Shaykhs Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-'Awdah became

known for their fiery sermons delivered in mosques in al-Qasim region of central Arabia.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, some of these dissidents were vocal in their opposition to the American attack on Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>

Usamah bin Ladin and his comrades and followers, on the other hand, seem to cleave to a more ecumenical and activist Islamist ideology, not necessarily Wahhabi or even Sunni but one which seeks to appeal to all Muslims. Thus his alliance with Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian founder of Islamic Jihad in Egypt, and his appeal to Arab Afghans from many countries. He is also distinguished by his insistent opposition to the US military presence in the Arabian Peninsula and by his uncompromising advocacy of violence to achieve his aims. Ideologically, Usamah descends from the extreme reactionary branch of Salafi Islamic revivalism that first appeared over a century ago. While many dissident Wahhabi activists may agree with some or many of Usamah's invectives, they are unlikely to regard him as their leader. While Usamah's Saudi origins cannot be dismissed entirely as significant in his ideological evolution, they clearly do not derive from either Saudi liberal or traditionalist positions. In many respects, he might as well have been an Egyptian, Algerian, or Yemeni.<sup>12</sup>

## ***A New Campaign of Saudi-Bashing and the Saudi Response***

One of the more alarming side-effects of 11 September was the emergence of a new round of Saudi-bashing in the United States. The kingdom had long been regarded with suspicion or hostility by some Americans because it was blamed for high oil prices, because it supported the establishment of a Palestinian state and thus was a foe of Israel, because it was seen as uncooperative with the American investigation of the 1996 al-Khubar bombing (when a truck bomb driven into a US military housing complex killed 19 American servicemen and wounded nearly 400 people of various nationalities) because it is not a Western-style democracy, because it insists on the segregation of women, and because of a widespread stereotype that its population is comprised of ignorant bedouins who undeservedly have traded in their camels for Cadillacs. But after 11 September 2001, hostility to Saudi Arabia intensified largely because most of the hijackers appeared to be Saudis and because of popular perceptions, stoked by the mainstream media, that the Saudis were not doing their part in the American 'war against terror,' following President Bush's dictum that 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'.<sup>13</sup>

The last months of 2001 were marked in the US by an intensive program of detention of mostly Middle Eastern suspects, including a number of Saudis.<sup>14</sup> The seemingly indiscriminate nature of the dragnet, the refusal to release information on detainees, and the denial of access by defence lawyers, sparked civil liberty concerns and fears of anti-Arab racism.<sup>15</sup> One prominent case involved a Saudi doctor studying in San Antonio who was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for 13 days simply because his name was similar to several hijackers.<sup>16</sup> A Muslim Arab-American Secret Service agent, on his way to Texas to provide protection to US President George W. Bush, was removed from an American Airlines plane he had already boarded.<sup>17</sup> Even a US Congressman of Arab descent, a member of a congressional

delegation on its way to Saudi Arabia, was bounced from an Air France flight in Paris.<sup>18</sup> By the end of the year, only 34 of the Saudis held by the US government had been released.<sup>19</sup>

Otherwise responsible media were full of anti-Saudi polemics. The *New York Times* published a hostile and error-filled editorial attacking 'Saudi Arabia's tolerance for terrorism' and its 'malignant behavior' and declared the American-Saudi relationship to be 'unsound', 'untenable and unreliable'.<sup>20</sup> One of its columnists blithely claimed that 'The Saudis never have been on America's side in the war on terror' and that 'for years, US officials kept mum about the duplicity of Saudi Arabia in financing anti-US incitement'.<sup>21</sup> The mayor of New York rejected a prominent Saudi businessman's humanitarian gesture of a \$10 million check for relief because he objected to his politics.<sup>22</sup> Based only on 'anonymous sources' within the US government, a journalist writing in the *New Yorker* magazine claimed that 'the growing instability of the Saudi régime ... [is] the most immediate threat to American economic and political interests in the Middle East'.<sup>23</sup> A regional newspaper surreally claimed that a former governor of Makkah and member of the ruling family, Prince Majid bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, had been taken prisoner in Afghanistan when in fact he was receiving medical treatment in the US.<sup>24</sup> A *Washington Post* editorial, while not as hostile, claimed that 'Saudi Arabia's autocratic system, while convenient for negotiating arms and oil deals, is itself one of the root causes of Islamic extremism.'<sup>25</sup>

Members of the United States Congress also made inflammatory statements. An American senator accused the Saudis of playing a 'double game' of giving extremists free rein at home and financing their groups.<sup>26</sup> The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee claimed that Saudi schools were 'hate-filled anti-American breeding grounds'.<sup>27</sup> Another senator, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, suggested that the United States should withdraw its military forces from the kingdom to 'a place which has not seen significant resources flowing to support some really extreme, fanatic views'.<sup>28</sup> Former CIA Director James Woolsey contended that Saudi Arabia 'deserves a very large part of the blame for September 11. I do not think we should do anything more with them right now than be cordial'.<sup>29</sup>

Some other writers and scholars were similarly critical. Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, author of a controversial book on 'the clash of civilizations'<sup>30</sup> which declared that Islam posed a threat to the West, reiterated similar views after 11 September.<sup>31</sup> A prominent leftist attacked Wahhabism as a 'peculiarly virulent, ultra-puritanical strain' of Islam and maligned its founder as 'an 18<sup>th</sup> century peasant who became tired of tending date palms and grazing cattle'.<sup>32</sup> An Israeli scholar, in an article in an American magazine titled 'Why Riyadh Stiffs America', concluded that 'the Wahhabist Saudi Arabian government ... may have more in common culturally and politically with America's foes in the current fight than it has with America.'<sup>33</sup>

The media reported that the Saudis had refused to arrest any of the suspects identified by the US government – although this was shown to be false.<sup>34</sup> The media also claimed that Saudi Arabia failed to close bank accounts used by individuals and organisations linked to al-Qa'idah. The Saudi response was slow, in part because of the government's claim that Washington had failed to provide evidence of the linkages or even advance warning of publicly announced lists of suspected terrorists and their organisations, but action was forthcoming.<sup>35</sup> Another media claim was that the Saudis had refused to allow American use of its military facilities for its Afghanistan campaign, including the American-run command center at Prince

Sultan Air Base outside of al-Kharj. Little heed was paid to official Saudi and American statements that the US government had never asked to base aircraft used in Afghanistan at Saudi bases and that the US military indeed used the Prince Sultan command center to direct the war.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, some members of Congress and the media continued to contend that Saudi Arabia was dragging its heels on cooperation in 'the war against terror'. Just as regularly, the White House countered that it had excellent cooperation with Riyadh.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the media attacks appeared to have played a key role in shifting American public opinion against Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. One opinion poll saw a drop in the US public's favorable view of Saudi Arabia from 56% to 24% between January 2001 and December 2001; over the same time, its unfavorable rating climbed from 28% to 58%.<sup>38</sup>

Are these allegations credible or simply incredible? First, rather than trying to push up oil prices, the Saudis (as well as many other members of OPEC) seek to maintain what they regard as a reasonable and stable price. The price of oil in real terms today is said to be less than it was before the oil price revolution in 1973-1974.<sup>39</sup> The plummet of crude oil prices to less than \$10 a barrel in 1998 and early 1999 (the price averaged slightly more than \$13 for all 1998), created severe budgetary problems for Saudi Arabia, which depends on oil for some 80% of its government income. Riyadh recorded its first budgetary surplus for more than a decade in 2001 because the price of oil rose to levels between \$25 and \$30. With the drop in oil prices in late 2001 and early 2002 to \$20 a barrel or less, the budgets of Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers went back in the red and development efforts had to be postponed or curtailed. Simply put, this cannot be called price gouging and it is in the interest of both the kingdom and the West that oil prices stay within a band around a mutually agreed optimal price, generally defined as \$25 a barrel.<sup>40</sup>

Second, the establishment of a Palestinian state is a central goal throughout the Arab world and enjoys significant support around the world. Riyadh's official stance is that a Palestinian state must be created on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and that the Oslo process is the best way to achieve a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors; in the absence of more systematic research, anecdotal evidence suggests that most of its citizens seem to support that position.

The Saudi complaint regarding al-Khubar, as well for events after 11 September, has been that the US government systematically has failed to share information and evidence. There are also hints that the FBI has been heavy-handed and over zealous in its activities in the kingdom, a similar charge as in the USS Cole investigation in neighbouring Yemen.<sup>41</sup> Certainly the Saudis are not blameless in this affair: Saudi security services have never been noted for their cooperation with other forces and often over-the-top in their treatment of Saudi citizens and especially expatriates. At the same time, however, the handing down of indictments in the case in June 2001 a few days before the expiry of the statute of limitations as well as the retirement of FBI Director Louis Freeh, without any prior notice to the Saudis and without the presentation of credible evidence, was regarded as an affront in Riyadh.<sup>42</sup> In the end, the Saudis resent American arrogance in seeming to believe that they can run these investigations as they like without regard to Saudi sovereignty.

It is certainly true that Saudi Arabia is not a Western-style democracy. It is also undeniable that the Al Sa'ud ruling family often acts as if the country belongs to them alone. And the political system is

authoritarian. But the régime is better described as patriarchal rather than tyrannical. Far from opposing change and denying basic rights to its citizens, the government has promoted steady economic and social change, albeit at a slow pace so as to keep a workable balance between traditionalists and modernists within the kingdom. While final decisions are made by the king and close family members, a highly educated senior government cadre, drawn from diverse backgrounds, has come to play a key role in the decision-making process. The *majlis* system, whereby many princes, governors, government officials, and prominent businessmen host regular sessions which all are welcome to attend and voice comments and complaints, provides valuable feedback despite the proscription of sensitive topics. Furthermore, the establishment of a formal Majlis al-Shura, although long in coming, is in itself an indicator of political transition. Anecdotal evidence again suggests that most Saudis do not want a different political system, they just wish the present system to be fairer and more responsive.

The practice differentiating the kingdom from nearly every country in the world, including its neighbors in the GCC, is its rigid segregation of women from men. This does not mean that its treatment of women is the same as the Taliban for, although women in the kingdom must be cloaked and indigenous women must be veiled, most are educated, many work, a large number travel abroad, and some run their own businesses.<sup>43</sup> It is arguable that female segregation is due more to social constraint than deliberate government policy and that the government has been slowly loosening the shackles, at the same necessarily slow rate as in many other fields. In the end, however, the truth is that Saudi Arabia can learn more in this regard from its neighbors from Kuwait to Oman, where women drive, study and work side-by-side with men, hold high government positions, and are eloquent in public participation.

It is inarguable that Wahhabism is a conservative expression of Islam and that Saudi Arabia's long isolation, historical development, and pressures of development have strengthened the hand of Wahhabi traditionalists. But this is a long way from contending that Saudi Arabia supports and foments extremism. Pious Saudis, and the government to some extent, have engaged in Wahhabi proselytizing efforts around the world, but then so have many Christian groups, including offshoots more extreme than Wahhabis. Undoubtedly, the Saudi establishment in Riyadh and Jiddah has realised rather belatedly that unsupervised religious activities can make fertile territory for a few extremists and serious soul-searching is in order as to how to separate the twisted extremists from the responsibly devout.

Are the Saudis really ignorant bedouin driving Cadillacs? No, of course not. A minority are rich, the same as Americans and Europeans. Some of these regard their fortune as a licence to do whatever they like, but others are competent, responsible businessmen who donate to charitable causes as is required in Islam. Many are educated, middle-class people. They drive Fords and Toyotas as well as Mercedes, they work in government offices or for corporations or as small businessmen, they seek loans to build their houses and promotions to provide for their children. Many Saudis are relatively poor, live in modest housing, and earn incomes as drivers and soldiers. Instead of being rich, a growing proportion are simply unemployed. Are Saudis anti-American? Undoubtedly a few are but the majority are absorbed with American culture even if they disagree with aspects of America's foreign policy.

The Saudi government, prominent members of the ruling family, the media, and key religious leaders all condemned the attacks of 11 September. Minister of Defence and Aviation Prince Sultan bin 'Abd al-

'Aziz commented that Usamah 'has done wrong to himself and to everybody'.<sup>44</sup> Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the US, told American television that 'The truth of the matter is, we think he's evil, bin Ladin. We think people who follow him are evil. We have pain for what happened in America ... We are condemning what happened. You guys are refusing to accept us.'<sup>45</sup> The heir apparent, Prince 'Abdullah, admonished top religious figures, including the Mufti (the highest-ranking religious designation) and the Minister of Islamic Affairs, not to be influenced by anti-Saudi rhetoric or to be 'swept away by emotions or be incited by anyone'.<sup>46</sup> King Fahd, in an interview on the eve of the annual GCC summit, was quoted as saying that 'It is normal that we cooperate to eradicate [terrorism] and ward off its evils.'<sup>47</sup> Prince 'Abdullah declared at the summit that "our Arab and Muslim nation was severely damaged because of the reckless acts of murders who raised the banners of Islam, ... and claimed to fight for the Arab and Muslim nation, which was the first victim of their crimes. ... It is the duty of all Muslims in these circumstances to condemn all terrorist acts, without ambiguity."<sup>48</sup> Even so-called dissident cleric Shaykh Salman al-'Awdah, imprisoned for five years because of his outspoken criticism of the Saudi government, condemned the attacks and told a journalist that 'What they did in America was to attack people they had no problem with in the first place'.<sup>49</sup>

In the absence of public opinion polls, the reaction of the Saudi public cannot be ascertained. But an opinion poll published in Kuwait on 19 November 2001 showed that 82% of Kuwaitis polled were opposed to the American attack on Afghanistan and 89% felt that the attacks would lead to a further struggle, but 71% approved of their government's cooperation in the US 'war against terrorism'. At the same time, however, 42% viewed Usamah bin Ladin as a *mujahid* (holy warrior) while only 34% saw him as a terrorist.<sup>50</sup> Presumably, the opinions of the Saudi public were not markedly dissimilar.

More importantly for American foreign policy, the régime repeatedly signalled its desire to continue strategic cooperation. The Saudis place great stress on the partnership. Unfortunately, for the formation of American popular opinion, much of that cooperation, as usual, is carried out quietly. The attitude of the Saudi government was that the close American-Saudi relationship had not been diminished or jeopardised, despite the differences. Disagreements always have been part of the relationship, just as trade disputes form part of the broad US-European relationship.

## ***The Impact on Saudi Arabia's Domestic and Foreign Policies***

The 11 September attacks and the American war in Afghanistan are likely to have substantial impact on the kingdom's policies but the dire warnings advanced in Western media that Saudi Arabia is on the verge of collapse are the stuff of fantasy. The same sorts of predictions of doom have been advanced at various intervals since the 1940s. First, it was said that the nascent state, full of regional rivalries and overwhelmed by its inability to manage the new phenomenon of oil income, could not outlast the death of King 'Abd al-'Aziz. A decade later, the kingdom was seen as tottering because of the incompetence and profligacy of King Sa'ud in the 1950s. Later it was contended that the kingdom was helpless to withstand the challenge of Arab nationalism in the 1960s, particularly with Nasir's Egyptian



forces poised in strength on Saudi Arabia's Yemen frontier. The fall of the Shah of Iran in the late 1970s brought predictions that the AlSa'ud would soon suffer the same fate. The collapse of oil prices in the mid-1980s was seen as another nail in the Saudi coffin. The rise and visibility of Islamic critics of the régime, both inside and outside the country, in the 1990s brought new fears that the kingdom's days were numbered.

But Saudi Arabia is not quite the dinosaur as the instant experts of the West seem to think. Certainly, the kingdom faces serious problems – in corruption, in the unchecked arrogance of the AlSa'ud, in growing socioeconomic difficulties, and so on. But the state has grown more sophisticated in dealing with these problems. The government swiftly took precautions to make certain that domestic religious dissent did not get out of hand.<sup>51</sup>

Adjustments to the events of 2001 cannot be predicted, of course. But likely effects may well include one or more of the following developments:

- The government is likely to exercise closer supervision and tighter control over the international Muslim organisations headquartered within the kingdom. It may well reassess and place stricter controls on the direction of its parallel Islamic foreign policy, although it is unlikely to regard official policies of building mosques and distributing Qur'ans as subject to revision.
- The state undoubtedly will seek closer control of domestic Islamists, to be demonstrated in intensified penetration of and strictures on Islamist groups and individuals as well as in less tolerance of deviation from official viewpoints. This may well have the unintended side effect of increasing Islamist dissent among disaffected elements and driving it further underground and outside the country. On the other hand, it may well provide a slight edge to the liberals in the unending task of balancing modernist aspirations against traditionalist obstructionism. Possibly this has been signalled already in the newly instituted issuance of identity cards for women and in the near future by tantalising promises that women may be allowed to drive motor vehicles.<sup>52</sup>
- The régime undoubtedly will be far more meticulous in keeping track of Saudi citizens who leave the country to join Islamic causes in such places as Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir. Still, just as Riyadh (and Washington) was not aware of the involvement of the Saudi hijackers of 11 September, it will prove difficult to prevent and/or detain such activists.
- In the short run, it is likely that official relations with the United States will cool slightly, particularly if there is no progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front and the US continues its uncompromising support of Israel. On the popular level, the United States may expect to see a short-term decline in the numbers of Saudi visitors, students, and investments. These are far more likely to be temporary dips rather than long-term consequences.<sup>53</sup> The picture will radically change, however, should hints about military action against Iraq become facts.<sup>54</sup> Public opinion in Saudi Arabia, not to mention all the Gulf states and the entire Arab world, has become convinced that ten years of United Nations sanctions have accomplished nothing concerning Saddam Husayn and his policies but have served only to bring suffering to the Iraqi people.<sup>55</sup>
- Saudi insistence on sovereignty is likely to mean stiffened Saudi resolve *vis-à-vis* the retention of jurisdiction over suspects in the 1996 al-Khubar bombing and especially any extradition of 11

September suspects (especially in the absence of US explanation or apology for detention of Saudi citizens).

- Ties to Islamic countries, especially Pakistan, are likely to be strengthened, particularly if the American involvement in Afghanistan continues. Given its perceived role as the protector of Islam, the kingdom will find it necessary to deal with the increasingly pessimistic mood throughout the Islamic world that Islam is under attack from the West.

Without a doubt, the last months of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 have been trying times for the kingdom – as well as for some of its fellow GCC members. It has seen a Saudi by birth become the most hated man on earth. It has discovered that Islamic extremists inside the kingdom and its extremist citizens abroad pose far more of a threat than it supposed and that real change must be made to disarm this threat. It has found itself the target of American hostility on a scale never seen before, leading to the real possibility that the 60-year American-Saudi alliance (the kingdom's closest bond outside the Arab world) will be jeopardised. While the long-term damage may be limited, the more immediate impact on Saudi policymakers and general population alike may be to rethink their overwhelmingly pro-Western and pro-American attitudes.

### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>The bin Ladin family has disowned Usamah and the children of his first wife live in Jiddah with their mother and apparently have no contact with their father. Usamah has other children by other wives who were living with him in Afghanistan, including one son Muhammad who was married in early 2001 to the daughter of Muhammad 'Atif, widely considered to be the military commander of al-Qa'idah. Suspicion has been raised that several of Usamah's brothers and two brothers-in-law have been involved in al-Qa'idah as well but this remains speculative. Hard information on Usamah is sketchy and conflicting and these details have been culled from many different sources. As an example, the media have stated routinely that Usamah's fortune from the family construction business is \$300m. But former head of Saudi intelligence Prince Turki al-Faysal said in a television interview that Usamah's inheritance was only \$40-50 million. Interview on Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), reported by Reuters, 7 November 2001. Of course, whatever he may have received as his share of the family business has been supplemented by profits from his various businesses in Sudan and elsewhere, as well as contributions from wealthy supporters. One report estimated that Usamah may have received more than \$50 million in contributions from Saudi and Gulf businessmen before the Saudi authorities became aware of the transfers and stopped them and rebuked the donors. AP, 6 July 1999. *USA Today* on 29 October 1999 quoted US intelligence officials as saying that prominent Saudi businessmen were paying Usamah 'protection money' through the National Commercial Bank.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of State, 'Factsheet on Usamah bin Ladin', 14 August 1996; Madawi Al-Rasheed, 'Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition', *Current History*, Vol. 95, No. 597 (January 1996), pp. 18 and 20; Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: St. Martin's Press; Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1999), p. 181.

<sup>3</sup>Reuters and AP, 22 April 1996; Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Middle East and North Africa, 31 May 1996, Saudi Press Agency, 31 May 1996. Mas'ari's apparent statement that the US soldiers killed in the bomb attack constitute a legitimate target sparked official Saudi outrage and an attempt by the British government to deport him to the Caribbean. Mas'ari claimed he had been misquoted and successfully petitioned the courts to stay the deportation order. Reuters, 16 November 1995, 6 January 1996, and 5 March 1996. A dispute shortly afterward between Mas'ari and Faqih led to the latter's formation of a separate group, the Movement for Islamic Reform. UPI, 12 March 1996.

<sup>4</sup>The 19 hijackers were named by the FBI on 27 September 2001 as: (1) Khalid Almihdhar, (2) Majed Moqed, (3) Nawwaf Alhazmi, (4) Salem Alhazmi, (5) Hani Hanjour, (6) Satam M.A. Al Suqami, (7) Waleed M. Alshehri, (8) Wail M. Alshehri, (9) Mohamed Atta, (10) Abdulaziz Alomari (11) Marwan Al-Shehhi, (12) Fayez Rashid Ahmad Hasan Al Qadi Banihammad, (13) Ahmad Alghamdi, (14) Hamzah Alghamdi, (15) Mohand Alshehri, (16) Said Alghamdi, (17) Ahmad Ibrahim A. Al Haznawi, (18) Ahmad Alnami, and (19) Ziad Samir Jarrah. (The names are given here in their original, sometimes garbled, form, including inconsistent transliteration). US Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Press Office, 27 September, 2001, <<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/092701hpic.htm>> as of Jan. 2002. The Saudis come from such areas as Bani Ghamid (in the western mountains), Jizan (on the Red Sea coast), 'Asir and Najran (in the south on the border with Yemen), a village near al-Madinah and the city of al-Ta'if (both in the important western province of al-Hijaz), and the northern rural region near Jordan. One report claimed that they included the brother of a police commander, the son of a tribal shaykh, the son of a wealthy businessman, two teachers, and three law graduates. *Sunday Times* (London), 28 October 2001. Early information on the backgrounds of the 19 men was sketchy, often inaccurate, and there was some belief that some of them had assumed the identities of innocent Saudi citizens. Saudi complaints that the United States government failed to provide documentation on the identity of the hijackers were coupled with doubts publicly and persistently expressed by some Saudi officials that any or most of the hijackers were even Saudi, for example Prince Nayif bin 'Abd al-'Aziz's remarks on 14 October, reported by AP and Reuters, 15 October 2001.

<sup>5</sup>*Arab News* (Jiddah), 14 December 2001, citing 'Ukaz (Jiddah).

<sup>6</sup>An unnamed Saudi intelligence official was said to have estimated that 200-1000 Saudis were involved in 2001 fighting in Afghanistan. *Washington Post*, 17 December 2001. The Saudi ambassador to Pakistan told a Saudi newspaper that some 140 Arab families, including Saudis but excluding men, were stuck on the Afghani-Pakistani border and that the kingdom was attempting to identify them and secure the Saudis' return to the kingdom. BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, *al-Watan* (Abha), 17 December 2001. About the same time, the Americans claimed to have captured a Saudi associated with the prescribed Wafa Humanitarian Organisation who they said was a high-ranking high-ranking member of al-Qa'idah. *New York Times*, 18 December 2001. The activities of Kuwaiti extremists was also of concern. One activist was Sulayman Abu Ghayth, who had defied the Iraqis during their occupation of Kuwait, acted as bin Ladin's spokesman during the early days of the American campaign in Afghanistan and was subsequently stripped of his Kuwaiti nationality. Reuters, 14 October 2001. Later press reports indicated that 44 Kuwaitis had taken part in the Afghanistan fighting, with seven of those being killed. *Gulf News* (Dubai), 20 December 2001, citing *al-Qabas* (Kuwait), 19 December. Pakistani Minister of the Interior Moinuddin Haidar told 'Ukaz (Jiddah) that US and Pakistani interrogators were questioning about 240 Saudis captured inside Pakistan after fleeing Afghanistan and that any with links to al-Qa'idah would be turned over to the FBI. Cited by Reuters, 5 January 2002. Pakistan ministers subsequently announced the 240 Saudis were the largest group among the approximately 300 Arab nationals arrested in Pakistan. Some 57 Arabs had been imprisoned and were being interrogated; of these 15 were Saudis, 17 Yemenis, four Kuwaitis, six Moroccans, one Iraqi, two French, and one Bangladeshi. AP, 13 January 2002. This information came shortly after the Saudi ambassador to Pakistan denied that any Saudis were in Pakistani jails. BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, *al-Watan* (Abha) website, 4 January 2002. Saudi nationals comprised at least two of the five men identified by the FBI as major al-Qa'idah suspects from a videotape recovered in Afghanistan. AP, 19 January 2002.

<sup>7</sup>As the term Wahhabi is more common, it will be used in this work. Contrary to media usage, Wahhabism is not a sect but a reformist movement within mainstream Sunni Islam and Wahhabis follow the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, the most conservative of the four recognised schools in Sunni Islam.

<sup>8</sup>On the Ikhwan and the political background to modern Saudi Arabia, see, *inter alia*, John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa'udi Kingdom, 1910-1930* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) and Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity* (London: Croom Helm; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). On Juhayman, see Joseph A. Kechichian, 'Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia: Juhayman al-'Utaybi's 'Letters' to the Saudi People', *Muslim World*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (1990), pp. 1-16, and the condoning account by another Islamic activist in Fahd al-Qahtani, *Zilzal Juhayman fi Makkah* [Juhayman's Shock in Makkah] (n.p., Munazzamat al-Thawrah al-Islamiyah fi al-Jazirah al-'Arabiyyah, 1987).

<sup>9</sup>Eventually, however, the universities established women's branches, thus bringing female education at the university level back under control of the Ministry of Higher Education.

<sup>10</sup>There has also been a history of opposition within the minority Shi'ah community of the Eastern Province but, for the most part, this has been due to discriminatory treatment rather than religious extremism. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 prompted some younger Shi'ah to agitate for greater Shi'ah freedom in an Iran-inspired Islamist framework, which then provoked a severe government response. It took several years for Riyadh to seek to redress the problem by funneling aid to Shi'ah areas and rebuilding Shi'ah mosques.

<sup>11</sup>The *Guardian* (London) reported on 8 October 2001 that Shaykh Hamud bin 'Uqla' al-Shu'aybi issued a *fatwa* (religious legal opinion) supposedly declaring that 'Whoever supports the infidel against Muslims is considered an infidel ... it is a duty to wage *jihad* on anyone who attacks Afghanistan'. Similar declarations issued by two other dissidents, Sulayman 'Alwan and 'Ali Khudayr. Shu'aybi died in Buraydah of a heart attack on 19 January 2002. AP, 19 January 2002.

<sup>12</sup>The marginality of Usamah in Saudi society (as the son of a Yemeni immigrant and thus not a true Saudi in the eyes of many) may also have been a factor in the development of his receptivity to extremism. Mamoun Fandy, in his *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, discusses the role of marginality in producing dissident religious activists in the tightly cohesive society of the kingdom.

<sup>13</sup>President's Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 20 September 2001, online at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>> as of January 2002.

<sup>14</sup>The FBI refused to give details about the thousands of individuals it had detained. Some 50 or more men apparently of Saudi nationality were reported to be on the bureau's terrorist watch list. *Washington Post*, 15 October 2001. At the beginning of 2002, the Saudi Embassy in Washington reported that it had been contacted by over 200 Saudi families seeking information on missing relatives and that 12 individuals (later revised to 34) had been released from custody. Reuters, 14 January 2002. Yemen reported that at least 16 of its nationals were being held; five were released on 9 January 2002. BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, *Yemen Observer* (Sanaa) website, 12 January 2002.

<sup>15</sup>Amnesty International was quoted in the *Financial Times* (30 October 2001) as remarking 'These are exceptional times ... But public officials must not take exception to their commitments to protect human rights and the rule of law. The United States will not be well served if it erodes its own values in the name of justice.'

<sup>16</sup>Even though Dr. al-Badr al-Hazmi was completely cleared and released, allowing him to take his family back to Saudi Arabia, he discovered on his return flight that his visa had been cancelled without his knowledge. He was forced to return to Saudi Arabia a second time and obtain a new visa there. AP, 8 January 2002.

<sup>17</sup>AFP, 28 December 2001. The airline claimed his paperwork was improper and that he was abusive. The agent, however, continued to deny the accusations and filed complaints with appropriate government agencies. *Washington Post*, 13 January 2002.

<sup>18</sup>The individual was Rep. Darrell Issa (California Republican). AP, 26 October 2001.

<sup>19</sup>Announcement of the release of first 22 and then an additional 12 released was made by the Saudi ambassador to the US, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who said that most of the Saudis held in the US had been detained for violating immigration laws, traffic laws, or other minor incidents. Reuters, 4 January 2002, citing the Saudi Press Agency. The comments and allegations of mistreatment of some of those released can be found in *Arab News* (Jiddah), 7 January 2002, and Reuters, 14 January 2002. An estimated 5000 or more men, many of them Arabs, had been taken into custody for investigation. Reuters, 4 January 2002.

<sup>20</sup>*New York Times*, 14 October 2001. The editorial opines that 'students of America's deeply cynical relationship with Riyadh have long known that the kingdom did little to discourage Islamic extremists, as long as they operated outside its borders, and that Washington muted its objections to keep oil flowing to the West. It is now clear that the Saudi behavior was more malignant.' It goes on to allege that 'Saudi money, religious teachings and diplomats helped the Taliban secure and keep control of Afghanistan' and 'Saudi Arabia has also sponsored the fundamentalist academies known as madrassas [sic] in Pakistan', incorrectly implying that the kingdom shares the extremist outlook of the Taliban and actively sought to support such views. The editorial also alleges, contrary to evidence, that Riyadh refused American requests for the assets of bin Ladin and his associates to be frozen, barred Washington from using Saudi air bases to launch attacks against Afghanistan, that Wahhabism is a sect, and that 'the only available outlet for criticism of government policies and corruption is Islamic fundamentalism'.

<sup>21</sup>William Safire in *New York Times*, 23 October 2001.

<sup>22</sup>AP, 11 October 2001. The businessman was Prince al-Walid bin Talal, who gave his explanation of the incident in the *New York Times*, 31 October 2001, and in an interview in *Middle East Insight* (January-February 2002).

<sup>23</sup>Seymour Hersh, 'King's Ransom', *New Yorker* (22 October 2001), p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>*Kansas City Star*, 4 January 2002

<sup>25</sup>*Washington Post*, 13 November 2001. The editorial rather simplistically compares the perceived refusal by what it terms 'the corrupt and authoritarian Saudi régime' to allow any political change to developments in its neighbors of Bahrain, Qatar, and Yemen, thus ignoring the slow but significant liberalising steps taken in the kingdom over the years. Prince Sultan bin 'Abd al-'Aziz responded to these attacks by charging that 'The campaign by some American and Western newspapers was launched against us because of the kingdom's position on the Palestinian issue even before 11 September attacks', and claimed that the campaign had been triggered by Prince 'Abdullah's letter to President Bush before the attacks, in which the heir apparent warned the US that its support for Israel was jeopardising Saudi-American relations. AFP, 20 December 2001. Prince Sultan's son, the Saudi ambassador to the US went even farther on US television, describing accusations that the kingdom encourages extremist violence and was not cooperating in the US anti-terrorist campaign as 'bullshit'. When asked if Saudi textbooks promoted hatred of the West, he replied that 'Islam is against hate, Islam is for tolerance, Saudi Arabia practices Islam.' *Ibid.* Other comments were simply scurrilous. An article by a Ralph Peters, identified as a retired military officer, published in the *Wall Street Journal* (4 December 2001), fumes that 'Saudis and Saudi money kill Americans and the Saudis refuse to arrest or even freeze the bank accounts of their implicated citizens', that 'religious hatred of the West is the national diet of information – and Saudi Arabia's only meaningful export other than oil', 'they joke about us as they would about prostitutes, and regard us as no better...', and 'we must be prepared to seize the Saudi oil fields and administer them for the greater good'. A columnist for the *Boston Globe*, Jeff Jacoby, wrote (13 January 2002) that 'the US-Saudi relationship has been dysfunctional for some time. The Saudis treat the Americans with highhandedness, and are rewarded for their disdain with military and diplomatic support', 'The real issue is not whether we do what the Saudis want, but when the Saudis are going to begin doing what America wants', 'They encouraged Al Qaeda's savagery. They radicalized Pakistan. They spread the Wahhabis' influence to the mosques of Europe and America', in the event of an American war on Iraq, 'Saudi Arabia [must] make its military bases available for staging the invasion' and if the Saudis refuse, 'We will seize and secure the oil fields. ... No longer would the petro-wealth of Arabia be used to advance Islamist fanaticism and terror – or to maintain a decadent ruling family in corrupt opulence'.

<sup>26</sup>Televised comment by Senator John McCain (Arizona Republican), reported in *Middle East Economic Digest*, 29 October 2001. On the same program, Senator Joseph Lieberman (Connecticut Democrat) said the Saudis 'have satisfied their extremists within their own societies ... [and] also financed some of these organisations' and declared that the United States 'can't tolerate a nation like the Saudis ... to promulgate that hatred'. *Washington Post*, 6 November 2001.

<sup>27</sup>Senator Joseph Biden (Delaware Democrat) in remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations. Reuters, 23 October 2001.

<sup>28</sup>Statement to reporters by Senator Carl Levin (Michigan Democrat) on 15 January 2002. Another congressman and chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Porter J. Goss (Florida Democrat) said that 'It's pretty tyrannical there'. *New York Times*, 16 January 2002. The *Washington Post* added flames to the fire two days later (18 January) when it claimed that Saudi officials had hinted that Riyadh might ask for the removal of US troops in the country. *The Economist* (26 January 2002) identified the source of this idea as Prince Talal bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, a former minister, exile, and ruling family member, and opined that the 'leak' was for local concepnction. The Bush administration quickly dismissed the report, with denials by the White House spokesman, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Air Force (Reuters, 18 January 2002), the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs (AP, 20 January 2002), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (AP, 22 January 2002). Secretary of State Colin Powell subsequently told television interviewers that 'we have not received a kind of notice or there have been no discussions of the kind suggested in that

newspaper story or any comments coming from the Saudis that would suggest that kind of action' and 'As long as these deployments are needed and serve a purpose, then I think they will be welcomed by the countries in the region, as long as we make the case to them and they understand why our troops are there'. Reuters 20 January 2002. Even Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defence, claimed he had heard nothing beyond the *Washington Post* report, adding 'I would think I would know'. *International Herald Tribune*, 21 January 2002. Even the Saudi Chief of Staff, General Salih bin 'Ali al-Muhayya, denied that the kingdom had changed its position regarding the hosting of US forces. Reuters, 22 January 2002. Undeterred, the *Washington Post* published an editorial (20 January 2002) charging that Prince 'Abdullah was caving in to the demands of Usamah bin Ladin, advocating that 'the administration must now recognize that Saudi political policies have become not just an unpleasant sideshow but a genuine menace to the United States – because the roots of Islamic extremism and terrorism lie in the intolerant ideology that Prince 'Abdullah bows to', and seemingly endorsing the removal of troops.

<sup>29</sup>AP, 8 January 2002. The United States apparently put pressure on Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih after his visit to Washington in late November 2001, amid a spate of media reports that the US was considering strikes on other countries allegedly harboring terrorists, such as Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Shortly after 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih's return home, the Yemeni army carried out a bloody attack against suspected militants in Ma'rib Province, which left at least 24 soldiers dead. Washington also asked Sanaa to permit US Marines to take part in the chase. Reuters, 25 December 2001. During the following week, Yemeni forces arrested a number of foreign students at a private religious institute in Ma'rib province. AP, 29 December 2001, and BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, *al-Rayah* (Doha) website, 3 January 2002. It is rather curious that Yemen focused on the remote Ma'rib, al-Jawf, and Shabwah provinces, which have always been antagonistic to government control and the source of the numerous kidnappings which have plagued the country in recent years, and not in the northern stronghold of Sa'dah or the southern area of Abyan where Islamic extremists have been more obviously present.

<sup>30</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

<sup>31</sup>See the interview with Huntington in *The Observer* (London), 21 October 2001, his remarks at a forum in Dubai that Islamic countries have 'dual dealings with the West. On the one hand they accept economic aid, yet on the other, they allow some groups and factions to practice terrorism' (*Gulf News* [Dubai], 16 November 2001), and his comments in *Newsweek* that 'Contemporary global politics is the age of Muslim wars. Muslims fight each other and fight non-Muslims far more often than do peoples of other civilizations. ... These instances of Muslim violence could congeal into one major clash of civilizations between Islam and the West or between Islam and the Rest' (January 2002, online at <<http://www.msnbc.com/news/672440.asp>> as of January 2002). According to the Iranian official news agency, he was quoted in a German weekly, *Focus*, as saying that 'For now there is hardly any doubt that Islam is the most intolerant among the monotheistic religions.' IRNA, 29 October 2001.

<sup>32</sup>Tariq Ali, writing in *Counterpunch*, 24 September 2001. As stated above, Wahhabism is not a sect and, although conservative and ascetic, it can hardly be called virulent. The denigration of Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab as a peasant is simply wrong. Son of a *qadi* (religious judge), Muhammad studied Islamic doctrine at Makkah, al-Madinah, Basra, and Isfahan, and was the author of numerous treatises. See the entry on 'Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab' by Henry Laoust in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 3, pp. 677b.

<sup>33</sup>Joshua Teitelbaum, 'Why Riyadh Stiffs America', *New Republic*, 22 October 2001.

<sup>34</sup>For example, a report in the *Washington Post* said that two suspected al-Qa'idah members were arrested in Bahrain shortly after the attacks and sent to Saudi Arabia. Using information they provided, Saudi authorities arrested six more al-Qa'idah members and provided the FBI and CIA with limited access to them. *International Herald Tribune*, 23 November 2001. Western diplomats in Riyadh were said to have confirmed that the Saudi authorities had rounded up

about 400 people linked to al-Qa'idah after the September attacks, although a few hundred had already left for Afghanistan. Reuters, 5 January 2002. Another report said that the Saudi government had asked the other GCC states to provide it with photocopies of passports of Saudis arriving from countries other than the kingdom in an attempt to prevent Saudis disguising their return from Pakistan or Afghanistan. BBC Monitoring Global Newline, *al-Rayah* (Doha) website, 10 January 2002.

<sup>35</sup>As late as November, the Saudis continued to complain that the US had provided no evidence backing up their demands for action against individuals and institutions and had not clarified identities of those on the list. One anonymous Saudi official was quoted as saying 'When [the Americans] ask us to do something, we say, "Give us the evidence". That's when they accuse us of helping the terrorists'. *New York Times*, 27 November 2001. One Saudi businessman, accused by the US Treasury Department of channeling money to al-Qa'idah, filed suit in a British court to stop the freezing of his assets in that country. *Ibid.* A high-level US delegation, composed of representatives from the Treasury, FBI, State Department, and National Security Council, arrived in the kingdom on 13 December 2001 to discuss the freezing of assets of suspected individuals and Islamic charities. These discussions apparently helped to sharpen identification of suspected culprits and enhanced cooperation. Reuters, 23 January 2002. Some 230 charitable organisations exist in the kingdom, with offices and representatives in about 55 countries, and during 2001 they collected more than 1 billion Saudi riyals (about \$275 million) from businessmen, members of charities, *zakat* (the Islamic alms tax), and returns on investments. *Arab News* (Jiddah), 14 December 2001. A similar complaint was heard in Kuwait when the US government asked Kuwait to freeze the bank accounts of the Social Reform Society on suspicion of funding terrorists. Kuwait had taken steps already against suspect charities. The Social Reform Society, however, is powerful in Kuwaiti politics (where no political parties are allowed) and it protested vehemently against the action. AP, 29 December 2001 and 10 January 2002. The United Arab Emirates in January 2002 enacted a law providing more detailed government control over money transfers, prompted by the use of UAE banking facilities by some of the 11 September hijackers for their transfers. AP, 23 January 2002.

<sup>36</sup>The *Washington Post*, correcting its earlier story of 22 September 2001, reported on 28 September that Saudi Arabia would allow US troops and aircraft stationed in the kingdom to participate in military action in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Colin Powell told a television interviewer on 23 September that the original *Washington Post* article was 'incorrect' in saying that he had protested any Saudi denial and added that the Saudis 'have been very responsive to all of the requests we have placed on them' (US Department of State transcript of the interview, 23 September 2001, online at <<http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/01092400.htm>> as of January 2002), and an unidentified senior administration official said that the US Central Command was operating its command and control center at the Prince Sultan base with 200 Americans working to coordinate the build-up of air power around Afghanistan (*Stars and Stripes*, 26 September 2001). Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal also denied the report on 26 September 2001, remarking 'You had the denial of the Americans about the truth of that article. Now you have the denial of the Saudis....' Reuters, 26 September 2001.

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, President Bush's comment during a telephone call with Prince 'Abdullah that 'press articles citing differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia are simply incorrect' (relayed by White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer during press briefing on 25 October 2001, online at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011025-5.html>> as of January 2002); the assertion of the unnamed US government official who told Reuters (6 December 2001) that the two governments had a 'positive, good dialogue'; the comment of White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card after Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal's meeting with President Bush that the Saudis 'have been very cooperative. The President expressed his appreciation' (*Washington Post*, 8 December 2001); the remark by Assistant Secretary of State William Burns that 'the United States relationship with Saudi Arabia is a very strong relationship, including in security' (Reuters 10 December 2001); and the White House's announcement that President Bush had telephoned Prince 'Abdullah to discuss the war on terrorism and 'thanked Saudi Arabia for their friendship, cooperation and help....' (Reuters, 14 January 2002).



<sup>38</sup>Poll carried out by Dr. James J. Zogby, President, Arab American Institute, 24 December 2001, reprinted in GulfWire, 24 December. Plans for a massive media campaign in the West to improve public opinion regarding the Arab world were shelved at the GCC summit in Muscat (30-31 December 2001). Reuters, 31 December 2001.

<sup>39</sup>*The Economist*, 6-13 March 1999.

<sup>40</sup>With petrol prices in the United States near \$1 a gallon (compared to about \$4 in much of Europe) and ownership of petrol-greedy four-wheel-drive vehicles steadily increasing, it is hard to fathom the indignation of American consumers that they are being gouged.

<sup>41</sup>In the weeks after the bombing of the US naval destroyer USS Cole in Aden Harbour in October 2000, it was reported that the FBI flew its investigators by helicopter into Aden from a ship offshore without even filing a flight plan on at least one occasion. AFP, 2 November 2000. The FBI's in-country relations deteriorated so greatly that the American Ambassador in Sanaa, Barbara Bodine, banned the head of the FBI's investigation team, John O'Neill, from setting foot in Yemen. *New York Times*, 6 July 2001; *Washington Post*, 7 July 2001. O'Neill retired from the FBI in August 2001 and, ironically, took up a new job as director of security for the World Trade Center two weeks before the attacks in which he was killed. CNN.com, 12 September 2001 (online at <<http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/12/victim.wtc.security/>> as of January 2002).

<sup>42</sup>An American grand jury on 21 June 2001 indicted 13 Saudis and a Lebanese for the bombing at the Khobar Towers. At a press conference in Washington on the same day, US Attorney General John Ashcroft alleged that those indicted were members of Saudi Hizbullah supported and directed by officials of the Iranian government. The timing of the indictments was governed by the imminent expiry of the statute of limitations on the crime, as well as by FBI director Louis Freeh's impending retirement. Iran immediately denied the allegations. AP, 22 June 2001. The following day, the Saudi Minister of the Interior, Prince Nayif bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, told a Saudi newspaper that the kingdom had not been given any advance warning of the step, maintained that trials must take place before Saudi judges, and averred there would be no extradition to the United States for crimes committed on Saudi soil. He also said that all but two Saudis and one Lebanese (identities not given) were in custody in Saudi Arabia. AP, 23 June 2001. There remains considerable doubt over the actual existence of a 'Saudi Hizbullah' and the indictment provided no clear evidence regarding Iranian involvement. Prince Nayif confirmed in an interview on 30 June that 11 of the 13 Saudis indicted were in Saudi prisons but reiterated that they would never be extradited. He also hinted that the trial of the 11 would begin soon. *New York Times*, 2 July 2001. The case had been marked by acrimony on both sides. The United States complained that the FBI were not given free access to detained suspects and the Saudi authorities failed to share all their information. From the Saudi point of view, the Clinton administration also withheld information, failed to keep the Saudis informed of American steps regarding the case, and the FBI acted arrogantly in the kingdom (see below for similar reports on FBI attitudes in Yemen). A gossipy account of the case was published by Elsa Walsh, 'Louis Freeh's Last Case,' *New Yorker*, 14 May 2001. The text of the indictments has been posted in <<http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/khobar/khobarindict61901.pdf>> (as of January 2002). Mention might also be made here of the seeming Saudi denial that their citizens were responsible for the 11 September hijackings. As late as 8 December 2001, Minister of Interior Prince Nayif portrayed Usamah bin Ladin as more of a tool of al-Qa'idah than its guiding force and insisted that Washington had not provided his government with any evidence that the hijackers were Saudi. Interview with *New York Times*, 10 December 2001.

<sup>43</sup>Recent statistics show that in 1419-1420 AH (1997-1998 AD), there were 2,369,000 female students in Saudi Arabia, compared to 2,405,000 males, and 21,721 women finished their higher education that year, compared to 21,229 men. Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning, *Achievements of the Development Plans 1390-1420 (1970-2000)* (Riyadh, 2000), pp. 308, 310, 317, and 320.

<sup>44</sup>BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, Saudi Press Agency website, 19 December 2001. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal told reporters on 26 September 2001 that 'it is the duty of all of us to stand against the perpetrators of those

abhorrent acts in the United States' but added that the money spent on a military campaign could be better used for aid for Afghanistan and that if the United States was not careful with its first military strike, it could have a catastrophic effect. Reuters, 26 September 2001. Saudi disquiet was echoed elsewhere in the Gulf. Also 26 September, the UAE Minister of Defence (and *de facto* head of government in Dubai) Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid Al Maktum condemned the 11 September attacks but called on the US to 'pause for reflection and give a chance to diplomacy and all legal means before it resorts to military action....' He added that 'I am worried about a hasty United States military action, as information about the perpetrators of the crimes in New York and Washington included many contradictions, like names of people who have been proven to be innocent.... I warn of the repercussions that would follow the death of innocent civilians in possible military operations and the fate of hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of Afghans who will flee the battlefields. The international community must expect a human catastrophe whose features have already started to emerge in the waves of Afghan refugees flooding into Pakistan.' BBC Monitoring Global Newline; WAM website 26 September 2001; Reuters, 26 September 2001. The Saudi Minister of the Interior, Prince Nayif bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, subsequently told reporters on 14 October that 'We had hoped that the United States have been able to extract the terrorists in Afghanistan without resorting to what has happened because there are innocents who have no guilt and the people of Afghanistan as a whole have no responsibility for [attacks on the US] ... This situation does not please us at all, but that doesn't mean in any way that we won't fight with all our efforts to uproot terrorism,' AP and Reuters, 15 October 2001. At the time of writing, the United States government still had not released any hard evidence of the guilt of Usamah bin Ladin and al-Qa'idah in the 11 September hijackings, although a videotape of Usamah's meeting with another 'Arab Afghan' from Saudi Arabia, discovered in the aftermath of the American attack on Afghanistan and released by the US Department of Defence on 13 December 2001, appeared to 'prove' guilt. *Washington Post*, 13 December 2001. The poor quality of the tape and various internal inconsistencies, along with its release by the American government, however, led many Muslims to doubt its veracity. Saudi dissident cleric Shaykh Hamud b. 'Uqla' al-Shu'aybi was quoted as claiming that 'This is a dubbed tape and is not real at all'. Reuters, 16 December 2001. But the Saudi government had no doubts, as shown by the statement of the Saudi Ambassador to the US, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who announced that it 'displays the cruel and inhumane face of a murderous criminal who has no respect for the sanctity of human life'. *Ibid.* Early reports that the Saudi speaking visiting Usamah in the videotape was a religious scholar were incorrect and Saudi sources soon identified him as Khalid 'Awdah Muhammad al-Harbi, a legless 'Arab Afghan' who had also fought in Bosnia and Chechnya. Reuters, 16 December 2001; *Washington Post*, 17 December 2001.

<sup>45</sup>AFP, 20 December 2001.

<sup>46</sup>Reuters, 14 November 2001.

<sup>47</sup>Oman News Agency interview relayed by Reuters, 29 December 2001.

<sup>48</sup>Reuters, 30 December 2001. Prince 'Abdullah also condemned Israel's repression of Palestinians and asked rhetorically, 'Would the bloody oppression ... occur if Israel were confronted by a united Arab and Muslim nation?' *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*New York Times*, 27 December 2001.

<sup>50</sup>Poll published in *al-Qabas* (Kuwait) as reported by Reuters, 19 November 2001.

<sup>51</sup>Saudi caution was echoed by pronouncements by senior religious figures in the kingdom. Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sudays told worshippers during the Friday *khutbah* (sermon) at the Great Mosque in Makkah on 28 September 2001 that 'It would be a grave calamity when the followers of this phenomenon [of terrorism] use religion as a camouflage, because true Islam stands innocent from all that', adding that Muslims should not 'mix up the concepts of real terrorism and legitimate *jihad* (religious struggle)'. Reuters, 28 September 2001. Prince Nayif bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, the Minister of the Interior, told a gathering of Saudi security officers to 'Be vigilant and reject those who try to impair security in the name of Islam', adding 'Do not forget that those who abused your country are those sitting in their caves and holes and

are sorrowfully associated with Islam and Islam stands aloft from them'. Reuters, 17 October 2001.

<sup>52</sup>Heir Apparent Prince 'Abdullah announced in late November 2001 that civil identity cards would soon be issued to women (*Arab News*, 27 November 2001, citing *al-Hayat*, 26 November) and the first several thousand cards were issued soon after. AP, 5 December 2001; Reuters, 10 December 2001.

<sup>53</sup>See, for example, the comments of Prince al-Walid bin Talal, the prominent Saudi businessman and investor, in an interview that 'Inevitably what's going on in America will scare Saudis for sure ... not only from investing in America but in going to America. All Arab names are ruined in America right now. If an Arab goes there he is a liability, he is not welcome.' Reuters, 23 October 2001. One report said that at least 300 Saudi students returned home after 11 September, many of whom cited harassment by officials and the American population for their decision. American consular officials admitted that the number of Saudi visa applications in late 2001 was running far below the 60,000 issued for the year up to October 2001. *New York Times*, 7 December 2001. Many of these, however, intended to return for the spring semester although mostly without their families. Anecdotal evidence from travel agents in the Gulf suggested that many Saudis were changing travel plans for the 'Id al-Fitr end-of-Ramadan holiday from the US or Europe to such destinations as Beirut, Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia, and India. *Gulf News* (Dubai), 12 December 2001. Another report said that investment capital worth \$24 billion had been withdrawn back to Saudi Arabia between 11 September and the end of November. *Arab News*, 2 January 2002. Subsequent reports contradicted this with Prince 'Abdullah bin Faysal bin Turki, Chairman of Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, guessing that only about \$4 billion had returned, and at least one US bank claimed that there had been no withdrawal of US-based assets. Reuter, 25 January 2002.

<sup>54</sup>At the time of writing, an American attack on Iraq seemed to be just sabre-rattling. Still, President Bush's hint in mid-November that Iraq could be next if it did not allow the return of UN inspectors was followed in mid-December by the comment of National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to *al-Hayat* (London) that 'the world and Iraq will live better without Saddam Husayn in power'. Cited by AFP, 20 December 2001.

<sup>55</sup>This was echoed in an interview of Prince Turki al-Faysal, shortly after he stepped down as chief of Saudi intelligence. "You target Saddam Husayn and no one will boo or hiss or object", he was quoted as saying. 'But bombings like the ones we saw against Iraq in 1998, or like the ones we've seen now in Afghanistan, with so-called collateral bombings, when bombs hit innocent people, will have strong resonance and very bad implications for relations with the West'. *International Herald Tribune*, 22 November 2001.