

Taking Saudi Out of Arabia

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The Arab Crisis

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The systemic crisis of the Arab World

- The Arab world has been in a systemic crisis for the last 200 years
- It missed out on the industrial revolution, it is missing out on the digital revolution
- Lack of inner resources to cope with modern world

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Shattered Arab self-esteem

- Shattered self-esteem
- Could God be wrong?
- Turn the rage against those who contradict God: the West, object of hatred
- A whole generation of violently anti-Western, anti-American, anti-modern shock-troops

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What has the Arab world produced?

- Since independence, wars have been the principal output of the Arab world
- Demographic and economic problems made intractable by failure to establish stable polities aiming at prosperity
- All Arab states are either failing states or threatened to fail

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The Crisis of the Arab world reaches a climax

- The tension between the Arab world and the modern world has reached a climax
- The Arab world's home-made problems overwhelm its ability to cope
- The crisis is consequently being exported to the rest of the world

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How does change occur in the Arab world?

- There is no agora, no public space for debating ideas, interests, policies
- The tribal group in power blocks all avenues of change, represses all advocates of change

- Plot, riot, murder, coup are the only available means to bring about political change

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The continuation of politics by other means?

- *In the Arab world, violence is not a continuation of politics by other means -- violence **is** politics, politics **is** violence*
- *This culture of violence is the prime enabler of terrorism*
- *Terror as an accepted, legitimate means of carrying out politics, has been incubated for 30 years ...*

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The crisis cannot be contained to the Arab world alone

- The crisis has irreversibly spilled out of the region
- 9/11 was a symptom of the "overflow"
- The paroxysm is liable to last for several decades
- U.S. response will decisively influence the duration and outcome

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"Saudi" Arabia

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The old partnership

- Once upon a time, there was a partnership between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia

- Partnerships, like alliances, are embodied in practices, ideas, policies, institutions, people -- which persist after the alliance has died

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"Saudi" Arabia

- An instable group: Since 1745, 58% of all rulers of the House of Saud have met a violent demise
- Wahhabism loathes modernity, capitalism, human rights, religious freedom, democracy, republics, an open society -- and practices the very opposite
- As long as enmity had no or little consequences outside the kingdom, the bargain between the House of Saud and the U.S. held

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Means, motive, opportunity

- 1973: Saudi Arabia unleashes the Oil Shock, absorbs immense flows of resources -- *means*
- 1978: Khomeiny challenges the Saudis' Islamic credentials, provoking a radicalization and world-wide spread of Wahhabism in response -- *motive*
- 1979-1989: the anti-Soviet *Jihad* gives life and strength to the *Wahhabi* putsch within Sunni Islam -- *opportunity*. The Taliban are the result

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The impact on Saudi policy

- Wahhabism moves from Islam's lunatic fringe to center-stage -- its mission now extends world-wide
- Saudis launch a putsch within Sunni Islam
- Shift from pragmatic oil policy to promotion of radical Islam
- Establish Saudi as "the indispensable State" -- treasurers of radical, fundamentalist, terrorist groups

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Saudis see themselves

- God placed the oil in the kingdom as a sign of divine approval
- Spread Wahhabism everywhere, but keep the power of the al-Saud undiminished
- Survive by creating a Wahhabi-friendly environment -- fundamentalist regimes -- throughout the Moslem world and beyond

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The House of Saud today

- Saudi Arabia is central to the self-destruction of the Arab world and the chief vector of the Arab crisis and its outwardly-directed aggression
- The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot-soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader
- Saudi Arabia supports our enemies and attacks our allies
- A daily outpouring of virulent hatred against the U.S. from Saudi media, "educational" institutions, clerics, officials -- Saudis tell us one thing in private, do the contrary in reality

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Strategies

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What is to be done?

- During and after World War I, Britain's India Office backed the House of Saud; the Foreign Office backed the Hashemites. The India Office won
- But the entire post-1917 Middle East settlement designed by the British to replace the Ottoman Empire is fraying

- The role assigned to the House of Saud in that arrangement has become obsolete -- and nefarious

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*"Saudi Arabia" is **not** a God-given entity*

- The House of Saud was given dominion over Arabia in 1922 by the British
- It wrested the Guardianship of the Holy Places -- Mecca and Medina -- from the Hashemite dynasty
- There is an "Arabia," but it needs not be "Saudi"

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An ultimatum to the House of Saud

- Stop any funding and support for any fundamentalist madrasa, mosque, ulama, predicator anywhere in the world
- Stop all anti-U.S., anti-Israeli, anti-Western predication, writings, etc., within Arabia
- Dismantle, ban all the kingdom's "Islamic charities," confiscate their assets
- Prosecute or isolate those involved in the terror chain, including in the Saudi intelligence services

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Or else ...

- What the House of Saud holds dear can be targeted:
 - Oil*: the old fields are defended by U.S. forces, and located in a mostly Shiite area
 - Money*: the Kingdom is in dire financial straits, its valuable assets invested in dollars, largely in the U.S.
 - The Holy Places*: let it be known that alternatives are being canvassed

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Other Arabs?

- The Saudis are hated throughout the Arab world: lazy, overbearing, dishonest, corrupt
- If truly moderate regimes arise, the Wahhabi-Saudi nexus is pushed back into its extremist corner
- The Hashemites have greater legitimacy as Guardians of Mecca and Medina

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Grand strategy for the Middle East

- Iraq is the tactical pivot
- Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot
- Egypt the prize