

**THE IMAGE OF SAUDI ARABIA IN THE BRITISH PRESS,
with Particular Reference to Saudi Arabia's Islamic Mission.**

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

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to trace the evolution of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British press from the 1970's to the 1990's. During this period, the image which the press and its readers had of Saudi Arabia underwent a transformation. At the beginning of the 1970's, Saudi Arabia was perceived as a distant, rather exotic, part of the Arabian peninsula, much of a muchness with the other states in the Gulf, a country about which little was or needed to be known by British readers. It appeared to have no particular importance for Britain, far less so than Egypt, Syria or Iraq which were seen as the countries of importance and influence, for good or ill in the Middle East and within the Arab world. By the beginning of the 1990's, Saudi Arabia was by contrast seen as a country which was of considerable importance for Britain both in particular and in a general, being of critical importance for the West as a whole as the holder of both the largest oil reserves and having the largest long-term oil production capacity in the world. It came to be presented as economically important as a market for British exports both visible and invisible; a country in which a substantial number of British citizens worked and thus required the maintenance of actively good diplomatic relations; a regional power; and, as at least one, if not now the most influential country in the affairs of the Arab world, when it chooses to exert its influence. A country therefore, which the readers of the quality press, the people with interest and influence in matters of foreign and economic matters, need to know about and have the features of her particular political, social and cultural system, as well as the nature and importance of it as an Islamic country and the force represented within and beyond it, explored, explained and discussed for them by their newspapers. Thus, a distinct and substantially detailed image of Saudi Arabia cumulatively evolved in the British quality press over the period covered by this study.

There have been very few earlier studies published which are of relevance to the image of Saudi Arabia. The existing studies have been carried out mainly in the USA and relate principally to the North American media and have tended to merge Saudi Arabia in the general stereotypes of 'Arabs', or of 'Islam', mostly deriving the stereotypes in fact from Palestinian Arabs, and have paid little attention to exploring the public image of Saudi Arabia as such. This is, therefore, a pioneering investigation in terms of the research question

addressed. It is also based on a much greater quantity and depth of data than has been explored in the previous studies.

The methodology employed is that of qualitative content analysis applied to the 'Quality' sector of the British Press, which unlike the 'Popular' press in Britain provides the systematic coverage of foreign affairs. *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times* were studied comprehensively during four, four week sample periods, selected to spread on either side of the four main, pivotal, events in Anglo-Saudi relations, and which, at each time, thus brought Saudi Arabia into the main focus for the British press, between the Oil Crisis of 1973 and the Gulf Crisis in 1990. Each of these, it was found, in fact led to a major extension or change in her image.

The conclusions of the study indicate the following: (a) that the image of Saudi Arabia has typically been favourable in the British press as compared with other countries of the area; (b) it developed stage by stage from being a shadowy entity to being seen as holding a prominent place in the Arab and the Islamic communities as well as occupying a significant one on the world stage; (c) the principal factors leading to the rise of Saudi Arabia's importance were seen by the Press as oil, its special position within and for Islam, a consistent foreign policy of moderation and active opposition to communism and other extremist political movements, general economic strength and its strategic location; (d) Saudi Arabia also came increasingly to be seen as additionally important through the influence it derived from using the weight of its oil, financial and political resources to support and to promote its Islamic ideals and Islamic mission beyond its own borders.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this Ph.D. thesis to Shatha

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INTRODUCTION

Individual groups, establishments and countries spend a huge amount of money on improving their image. Saudi Arabia is no exception. In fact as 'Guardian of the holy places' and Islam, Saudi Arabia has an obligation to be zealous about the image of Saudi Arabia and its Islamic ideals.

With the aim of better understanding the factors involved in the external perception of Saudi Arabia and its system, this study attempts to describe and analyse qualitatively the image of Saudi Arabia in the British press.

There is relatively little literature about the external image of Saudi Arabia and even this is often from a very generalised perspective, often referring to Saudi Arabia as simply stereo-typical of 'Arabs' and 'Islam'. No systematic and specific study of the image of Saudi Arabia as such has, as yet, been published. This study is an attempt to discover a pattern in the complex picture of its past, and to indicate possible tendencies for the future evolution of the perception of Saudi Arabia.

The term 'image' is based on the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "... a concept or impression created in the minds of the public, of a particular person, institution or product." For the purposes of the topic of this particular piece of research, the definition has been narrowed down to 'a concept or impression of Saudi Arabia as published in a selection of British newspapers during a succession of sample periods over a period of eighteen years.'

There are many reasons for researching the image of Saudi Arabia in the British press. First and foremost, it is an intellectually interesting subject given the

complexity of Saudi Arabia itself and the fact that the connections between Britain and the Arabian peninsula stretch back over a century. The nature and character of the image of Saudi Arabia and its ideals might also be crucial in the future for those who are concerned about Saudi Arabia and what she stands for.

In 1980, Wilbur Schramm wrote that,

“... the world consists of individual and national actors and since it is axiomatic that action is based on the actor’s image of reality, international action will be based on the image of international reality. This image is not shaped by the news media ... alone; personal relations abroad, diplomatic dispatches, etc., account too - whether less, equally much or more, we do not know. But the regularity, ubiquity and perseverance of news media will in any case make them first-rate competitors for the number one position as international image-formers.”¹

Kenneth Boulding also argued that,

“... we must recognise that the people whose decisions determine the policies and actions of nations do not respond to the ‘objective’ facts of the situation, whatever that may mean, but to their ‘image’ of the situation. It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behaviour .”²

The same point has also been made by most of the leading contemporary scholars of media roles and influences such as John Ellis (1989), Jack Shaheen (1979) and William Adams (1980).

¹ Schramm, W: “Circulation of News in the Third World: A Study of Asia”, in: Wihoit, C. and de Bock, H. (eds): *Mass Communication Review Book*, Sage, Beverly Hills. 1980. P.618.

² Boulding, K.E: “National Images and International Systems”, in Rosenau, J.N. (ed): *International Politics and Foreign Policy. A Reader in Research and Theory*. (Revised Edition), The Free Press, Collier MacMillan Publishers, London. 1969. P.423.

To be able to arrive at well-grounded conclusions about the image of Saudi Arabia, it has been necessary to study the information which appeared in the Press as well as the evolution of the image over a sufficiently long period of time, because images are cumulatively formed. However, given the huge quantity of column inches which the daily press of a modern society produces, methods of sampling have had to be devised and employed. The two principal methods of sampling were applied.

1. Only the 'quality' section of the British press was covered : not the 'popular' section, and only the principal national daily 'quality' papers were examined. Narrowing the research coverage down to a manageable quantity in this way does not, however, affect the validity of the conclusions, because matters of foreign policy and of economic relations with foreign countries, especially as far away as Saudi Arabia, are typically and regularly only the concern of the British newspapers which form the 'quality' section of the press. The British popular press concentrates more on domestic matters and only occasionally covers such matters, and then only in an episodic fashion. Both the sustained interest and knowledge which such matters require tend to be the preserve of the educated and a politically concerned elite in Britain, and it is also these people who tend to have an influence in these policy areas.
2. Rather than take a random sample, such as a particular day, a particular page, or some similar statistical method commonly employed for content surveys over a long period of time - which at best, give a statistical representation of the extent of coverage and a basis for an impressionistic assessment of the character of it but cannot deal with the more sophisticated question of the 'image' of a country - it was decided to apply

the technique of sample periods, selected not randomly, but around events of major importance in the history of the relationship between the two countries. These events were the oil crisis of 1973, the Makkah crisis of 1979, the 'Death of a Princess' crisis of 1980 and the Gulf crisis of 1990. The advantage of this approach was that during these events, the attention of the British press and of the political class were, at least to a significant extent, actually focused on this particular country, and therefore, both the quantity and quality of the coverage was high. In addition, because the attention of the public was heightened in relation to the whole region, what was published during these periods was likely to have an impact on the evolution of an image in the minds of the public.

The British 'quality' press is dominated, or at least was dominated during the complete period between 1973-1990 by three newspapers, which between them covered the political spectrum within the educated elite: namely, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*.

The Times traditionally represents the centre and high ground of British politics with a party-politically neutral viewpoint, though during the last two decades it has been seen to be tending more to the right than before. *The Times* has also traditionally been considered as the most prestigious of newspapers, occupying a special position as such, though this paramount position has been substantially eroded since the Second World War. By the period covered by this research, it had become less of a first amongst equals. Nevertheless, *The Times* remains the single most important newspaper of the British 'quality' press, particularly at times of major international crises.

The Guardian was always on the centre left of British politics, originally supporting the Liberal Party but more recently, at least in broad and intellectual terms, supporting the Labour Party. It is the principal newspaper of the educated, socially and politically aware and concerned sections of the educated elite of Britain and of those with a centre left inclination.

The *Daily Telegraph* is on the centre right of British politics, principally the newspaper taken by those sections of the elite which typically support the Conservative Party and it reflects the alternative perspectives to those broadly reflected in *The Guardian*.

In addition to the above three papers, the *Financial Times* was also selected because it is the standard reading matter of the business, economic and financial elite who might read one or more of the quality newspapers, depending on their political inclinations, but who might look to the *Financial Times* for very high quality factual information and an objective analysis without a party-political hue, to assist them in making financial and economic judgements. The presentation and image of Saudi Arabia in this context is particularly relevant, given the extensive economic dimensions of Saudi Arabia as an oil country of major financial importance.

Between them, the readership of these four newspapers substantially covers most, and certainly the majority, of the political and economic elite of Britain and especially those who might have some influence with regard to Britain's relationship with foreign countries in terms of political, diplomatic and economic dimensions.

During the period covered by this study, another newspaper, namely *The Independent*, emerged as a newspaper also read by members of the elite and was, therefore, influential for the same reasons already given for *The Times*, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*. Unfortunately, it was not in being for the whole of the period covered by this research but a future study should certainly include *The Independent*. Similarly, the Sunday newspapers, which were not studied during this research project due to time limitations, should also be included in future research projects.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of an Introduction, five main Chapters, a Conclusion, and a Bibliography.

Chapter One provides a review of related literature which is divided into three sections. The first provides a general discussion of the literature relating to 'image' and perceptions and the factors affecting the processes through which newspaper content, and what a newspaper covers or does not cover, comes about. The second section discusses the literature relating to the image of Third World countries in the Western media. The third section reviews the literature relating to the image of 'Arabs' or 'Islam' and highlights the fact that, in the literature so far, the image of Saudi Arabia has usually been immersed in these stereotypes.

The following four Chapters then represent the main research findings which emerged from the study of the four pivotal events chosen as the sample periods in the evolution of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British 'quality' press. Each of these led, in fact, to a significant shift of focus onto different aspects of Saudi Arabia and thus elaborated that image. Therefore, each of these Chapters

has, at least to some extent, focused conceptually on different issues relating to Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Three surveys the rather sketchy image of Saudi Arabia as it had evolved by 1973, before the Oil Crisis focused attention onto Saudi Arabia in a major way and led to it being seen as emerging into a regional power and of special importance amongst 'oil countries'.

Chapter Four starts by reviewing the further evolution of that image in the context of the so-called 'oil shock' of 1979, but then, with the sudden occurrence of the completely unexpected seizure of the Grand Mosque by a group of religious extremists, which led to the press seeking to understand and present the Islamic and social structure of Saudi Arabia and the tensions within Saudi society arising from them, the focus of the concluding part of the Chapter switches to those issues.

Chapter Five considers what could be described as the first and, so far, only crisis in the typically placid and harmonious Anglo-Saudian diplomatic relationship. This was the result of the making, and then the showing of the film 'Death of a Princess' in 1980 by British television, despite Saudi Arabian protests. Diplomatic relations were soon patched up and, as a diplomatic event, it had little lasting importance but it resulted in the most extensive exploration and discussion in the 'quality' press and outside it of the socio-cultural structure and character of Saudi Arabia in general, and the position of women in particular. In other words, those areas where there had always been the least understanding and where the gulf between the fundamental social, cultural and political assumptions between Saudi Arabians and the British was the widest, were suddenly thrust into the forefront of the news.

Chapter Six deals with the presentation of Saudi Arabia in the context of the outbreak of the Gulf Crisis, the military occupation of Kuwait by Iraq's Saddam Hussein and the implied threat of Iraq marching into Saudi Arabia, and possibly beyond, into the most oil rich area of the world. It was the first time that the Saudi Arabian state and Saudi Arabian society faced the supreme test of the threat of war and the capacity to face up to potentially fateful choices and decisions as an Islamic and Arabic country: whether or not to ally with, and potentially wage war alongside, the West with Western military forces on her soil, against another Arabic, and at least formally, Islamic country. Therefore, attention focused for the first time on Saudi Arabian military and diplomatic capabilities and on the authority and effectiveness of her system of government when it came under critical pressure. These were of course, major and important elements in the image of Saudi Arabia in the eyes of other countries but which had been largely unexplored in the British press until this point. There is a sense, therefore, in which the Gulf Crisis provided an occasion for the British 'quality' press to present the last major piece of the jigsaw concerning the British image of what kind of a country, society and culture Saudi Arabia was and still is.

The final Chapter of the dissertation presents the overall conclusions drawn from the study. It seeks to summarise the image of Saudi Arabia as it had evolved by the 1990s. It explores implications for the future development of that image and it also makes suggestions for further studies which could explore the topic in more detail.

Nearly all the events which I studied, as presented in the British 'quality' press, took place before my own eyes. I felt many of them very deeply, not only as a Saudi Arabian citizen but as a personal witness. Therefore, my dissertation

was written with a feeling of respect for the UK. and also a feeling of love for my own country and its ideals. At the conclusion of my study, I feel a deep sense of hope and a desire for the people of Saudi Arabia and of the UK to share a future of understanding, peace and co-operation, despite all the differences between the two countries and their cultures.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This Chapter will survey the literature which provided the starting point, the background and a theoretical context for the research concerning the evolution of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British 'quality' press. It is organised under three headings:

1. General and theoretical Factors influencing the public's knowledge about and image of, the image of 'the world outside'.
2. The image of the Third World countries.
3. The image of Arabs and Saudi Arabia.

1.2 GENERAL AND THEORETICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE ABOUT, AND IMAGE OF, 'THE WORLD OUTSIDE'.

Today, the public primarily gain their knowledge about, and form their image of, events, places, people or countries at a distance beyond the range of their own experience, second-hand, from the mass media. The formation of the public's knowledge and image of a 'far away country' is a complex process affected by many factors. Some of these are bound up with the complex, and as yet still not substantially understood, psychological and social processes of learning and opinion formation which are a subject and indeed a discipline of their own and which, within the compass of this study, cannot be entered into. The others primarily involved concern the practices of the media itself, the ways in which the content of newspapers, television, radio and related media

come to be formed, the professional practices through which the 'content' of a newspaper, what is covered and what is not and when certain aspects or events to be covered come to be determined, and the ways in which these factors interact with the audience to cumulatively build up a mosaic image.

One of the first and highly seminal works about the relationship between the mass media and the public image is by Walter Lippmann in his "The World Outside and the Pictures in our Head", Lippman argued that there is an influence and effect of the press on the readers. He believed that image is not based, "... on direct or certain knowledge, but on pictures made by [one] self or given to him." Further, Lippman presented some factors, which he thought contributed to the image creation process:

"...They are the artificial censorships, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meagre time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs, the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages, the difficulty of making a small vocabulary express a complicated world, and finally the fear of facing those facts which would seem to threaten the established routine of men's lives."¹

Hirsch, in *Strategies for Communication Research* (1977), and Schoemaker, in "Building Theory of News Content" (1987), added several other factors which they believe affect coverage and content in general, contribute to the image shaping process, and have an effect on the audience. They are the following:-

¹ Lippman, W.: "The World Outside and the Pictures in our Heads" in Schramm, W. and Roberts, D.F. (eds): *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*. University of Illinois Press. 1977. P. 284-285.

1. journalists, as a particular social and occupational group;
2. the newsroom operation;
3. the media organisation;
4. the social context and the context of other institutions in which they operate; and,
5. the ideology and culture, in general, of both journalists and their readers.²

The following section will briefly analyse representative studies of each factor that is believed to be responsible for the message content which contributes to the different images we hold about the environment and world outside.

There are many studies which concentrate on journalist and the operational mode in the newsroom as the main factors which influence the content of the media which shape our image.

In their classic study, Galtung and Ruge (1965) concluded that,

“Events became news to the extent that they satisfy the conditions of: frequency, threshold, absolute intensity, intensity increase, unambiguity, meaningfulness, cultural proximity, relevance, consonance, predictability, demand, unexpectedness, unpredictability, scarcity, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people and something negative.”³

² Lippman, 1977. See also Hirsch, P.L., Miller, P.V. and Kline, F.G. (eds): *Strategies for Communication Research*, Sage, London 1977. See also Schoemaker, P. and Myfield, E.: “Building Theory of News Content”. *Journalism Monographs*. Vol. 103. June 1987.

³ Galtung, J. and Ruge, M.: “The Structure of Foreign News”, *Journal of Peace Research*. 1965. Vol. 2, pp. 64-91.

Galtung and Rug warned that these factors are not independent in most cases although they generally held that the content of the media which contributes to image shaping is primarily the result of selection by journalists adhering to professional norms about 'news-values'.⁴

Abraham Z. Bass (1969) suggested that there are, in fact, two parts to this process: the news editing process by the newspaper editors and news gathering. However, he believes that the most important part is the latter one where significant decisions are made about the reporting of events.⁵

Barbara Phillips (1976), in a study based on 13 months of field observation and interviews in various media organisations, found that conventions about style and structure of media coverage in itself influences the nature of the news process. Phillips believes that such influence "... inhibits broader insights into changing realities."⁶

In another study, which examined the role of seven news factors developed by Galtung and Rug in their classic work of 1965, Sophia Peterson analysed the extent of fidelity of the press in shaping our image. The seven factors which Peterson focused on were: unambiguity, frequency, threshold, personal elitism, national elitism, meaningfulness and negativities. The study of these factors examined the published and unpublished international news in *The Times* during two periods: 3-9 January and 4-10 February 1975. A comparison was made between the published news and the unpublished news. Peterson concluded that there is considerable evidence that the lack of fidelity

⁴ Ibid..

⁵ Bass, A.Z.: "Refining the Gate Keeper Concept", *Journalism Quarterly*. 1969. Vol. 46, pp. 69-72.

⁶ Phillips, B.: "Novelty Without Change", *Journal of Communication*. 1976. pp87-92.

between the "... world outside and the picture in our heads..." exists.⁷ For example, the published news covered 47 stories while the unpublished news covered 57. Also, the published news related to 71 actors while the unpublished news related to 152. Peterson added that these conclusions support the Third World's claim about the imbalance and distortion of news flow which influences the image of developing countries.

Peterson's study is to some extent limited in value as it was limited to a single newspaper and a short period of time, and the question as to whether within that period there were major events which might have caused the imbalance of that paper in that period of time, has not been explicitly considered. Nevertheless, Peterson's study provides empirical evidence for the functioning of mass media coverage of the world. It also specifically supports Lippman's 1977 study concerning "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Head". In a broader perspective than these studies, Lewis Donohew (1967) studied the factors which related to the decision to choose one news item rather than another. Donohew postulated the following factors:

1. the influence of the owners' views and attitudes, and,
2. perceived community opinion of the behaviour of news gate-keepers as indicated by:
 - (a) news coverage of given topics, and
 - (b) community conditions as related to coverage.⁸

⁷ Peterson, S.: "International News Selection by Elite Press: A Case Study", *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 1981. Vol. 45, pp.142-166.

⁸ Donohew, L.: "Newspaper Gate Keeper Forces in the News Channel", *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 1967. Vol. 31, No. 1, P.61-68.

Donohew's study concluded that the publisher's attitude is an important force in the news channel, but his findings did not support the hypothesis that community conditions are related to coverage although some important negative correlations were found.

Studies considering government policies as an influence on news process studies have arrived at different conclusions. The shift of the USA's policy to pro-West Pakistan during the conflict between India and Pakistan in 1971 allowed Lee B. Becker (1977) to examine the relationship between the USA's foreign policy and press presentation. The aim of Becker's study was to analyse the relationship between government policy and press coverage of world affairs. The study used the coverage of the *New York Times* as the "experimental" setting and the coverage of *The Times* (London) as the "control" situation.

Becker found that the *New York Times* changed its news view or position, but in the opposite direction to that of the leaders in Washington. However, when the *New York Times* coverage was compared to that of *The Times* of London, Becker suggested that some minor changes in the quantitative analysis appeared. Becker concluded that such changes might have resulted from the fact that, "The reporters and editors sensed pressure and reacted by shifting away from its thrust."⁹

In his study, "Ideological Perspectives and Political Tendencies in News Reporting", George Gerbner found that all editorial and news items in the media have an ideological identity. When comparing the party press with

⁹ Becker, L.B.: "Foreign Policy and Press Performance", *Journalism Quarterly*. 1977. Vol. 54, No. 2, P. 364-368.

the commercial press in their coverage of a local murder event in France, Gerbner discovered that, "France's emerging commercial press does not escape from politics, its ideological perspectives lie between those of the left press and the right, but closer to the latter."¹⁰ The study covered the event in nine newspapers; three represented the left press, three represented the right press and three represented the commercial press. Gerbner concluded that the coverage of the incident in the three groups suggested that apparently non-political news still expressed and cultivated an ideological perspective and that this applied as much for the commercial press as for the political press.

Using quantitative tools, Bernard Anderson¹¹ carried out a content analysis on 88 issues of 18 elite newspapers in the USA and the UK relating to the image of the Third World within the papers, and postulated that "...news is ideology...". The study found that Third World countries received only 5% of column space coverage, and that was mostly devoted to political and economic types of coverage. Anderson presented an interesting comparative hypothesis when he related the type of Third World coverage on the one hand to the coverage of sub-cultural events inside one Western country. In Anderson's words:

"The third world is minimally and poorly explained in Western print news for much the same reason, I suggested, as those factors which account for the type of print news coverage given to the poor, disenfranchised, disadvantaged and marginalized."¹²

¹⁰ Gerbner, G.: "Ideological Perspectives and Political Tendencies in News Reporting", *Journalism Quarterly*. 1964. Vol. 41, P. 495-506.

¹¹ Anderson, B.: "A Comparative Structural Analysis of the Context of Images of the Third World in American and English News Publications", *Unpublished Ph.D*, London University. 1987.

¹² Anderson, B. 1987. P.330.

He concluded that it would be "... pointless to lay on specific institutions [or] professions" the blame for misrepresenting the third world": rather, "... the entire country, society and economic system are as much to blame."¹³

1.3 THE IMAGE OF THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

The "image" issue is often at the centre of major debates between the Western news media on the one side and Third World countries on the other side. The controversy over the imbalance and distortion of the coverage of Third World or developing countries by the Western media has been one of the factors which has contributed to lots of research and development within "image" studies. The debates on this issue prompted UNESCO, at its General Conference in 1976 in Nairobi, to undertake a review in a global framework of problems of communication in contemporary society.

Many Voices, One World (1980)¹⁴ is the title of the very extensive report by sixteen members from different countries who aimed to study the communication problems of an increasingly globalised world. The central issue raised in this report was the conflict between the Third World countries and the Western countries over the imbalances and distortions of the news flow in the Western media, concerning the developing countries. The Third World countries called for a new world information and communication order sponsored and supported by UNESCO.

¹³ Ibid. P.331.

¹⁴ McBride, S., et al: *Many Voices, One World*, Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems: Paris, UNESCO, Kogan Page, London. 1980. P. 175.

Among the various extensive subjects which the reporters tackled was “the distortion of content”. The section of the report devoted to this is relevant to the present study, although the report concerns itself with the Third World in general, and not with a specific country.

In *Many Voices, One World*, the distortion of news content is said to occur “... when inaccuracies or untruths replace authentic facts...”, as well as when the media gives prominence to non-important events for presentational reasons and presents random data as the whole or partial truth. The authors concluded that “... in many instances, a more heightened sense of journalistic responsibility might present a fuller, fair(er) and more accurate picture of the world to the public it serves.”¹⁵

Several other studies have been conducted relating to particular sub-cultures or segments within the Third World countries which support the general claims made. The image of Africa in six newspapers was studied by C. B. Pratt (1988).¹⁶ The study aimed to answer two main questions by using quantitative methods.

1. What depth of coverage do the selected magazines have on Africa?
2. What image do they, by implication, present to their readers?

The study revealed that, the minuscule coverage of the continent, both in terms of geographical area, typology and the emphasis on violence, portrays Africa negatively. For example, 86% of the news in the *New York Times* during the period of the study was news about conflict. In addition, 84% and

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Pratt, C.: “The Reportage and Image of Africa in Six USA News and Opinion Magazines: A Comparative Study”, *Gazette*. 1980. Vol. 26, No. 1, P. 87-92.

70% of the news in *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*, respectively, was about conflict too.

Pratt argued that while there are true crises and conflicts in many countries in Africa which need to be covered, "... it is disheartening to observe media staffers' rationalisation of a Pavlovian response to turbulence."¹⁷

1.4 THE IMAGE OF ARABS AND SAUDI ARABIA

"The Image of the Arabs in America: Analysis of Polls on American Attitudes"¹⁸ was a study which was concerned with the image of different Arab countries and Islam. Shelley Slade, who analysed the poll which was conducted by a private organisation over the telephone with six hundred Americans, found that Saudi Arabia enjoyed a balanced perception compared to other Arab countries. Further, the study revealed that 6% of the respondents have a very high opinion of Saudi Arabia, 38% a fairly high opinion, 28% a fairly low opinion and 13% a very low opinion.

The study also found that 25% thought of Saudi Arabia as a friendly country. Slade believed that this was very low in the light of the political and economic ties between the two countries. However, within the 25% who regarded Saudi Arabia as 'friendly', most of them selected 'oil', 'oil production' or 'gas' as the term that came to their minds when Saudi Arabia was mentioned. Moreover, 70% of them saw Saudi Arabia as rich and 45% saw it as a strong country.

¹⁷ Ibid.. P. 87-92.

¹⁸ Slade, S.: "The Image of the Arabs in America: Analysis of Polls on American Attitudes", *Middle East Journal*. 1980. Vol. 35, P. 143-162.

Slade found that there was a correlation between the respondents' opinions towards Saudi Arabia and the degree of stereotyping of Arabs and any other Arab country. In relation to the media, the analysis revealed that only 18% of the sample who watched the film '*Death of a Princess*' were likely to have a favourable opinion of Saudi Arabia and "Arabs".

Slade concluded that the poll showed "Arabs" in general as unfriendly towards the USA.¹⁹

"Image Formation and Textbooks"²⁰ is the title of a study by Ayad Al-Qazzaz which was undertaken to determine if texts published since 1975 have improved in their representation of Islam. Using a qualitative content analysis of chapters and pages of high school world history textbooks, the study found that, "The image of Islam is misrepresented in some American textbooks as a warlike religion in which women occupy a position of servitude."²¹

The author analysed and presented many methods of misrepresenting Islam such as inaccuracy, distortion, false information and omission. One example of an inaccuracy in one textbook was that, "Ramadan is the month in which Mohammed was born, received his revelation from Allah, made the Hejjira and died." With the exception of the revelation, the rest of the statement is totally false.²²

¹⁹ Slade, S. 1980. P.143-162.

²⁰ Al-Qazzaz, A.: "Image Formation and Textbooks" in Ghareeb, E. (ed): *Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media*, American Arab Council, Washington, D.C. 1983.

²¹ Ibid.. P.379.

²² Ibid.. P.378.

In his book *“Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media,”*²³ Edmund Ghareeb analysed the imbalance and distortion of the USA’s media coverage of Arabs and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The study found that the American media presents Arab people and countries as incompetent, backward, scheming, fanatical terrorists, dirty, dishonest, oversexed, corrupt, bumbling, cowardly and super-rich. On the other hand, the study found that the American media presents the Israeli people and state as threatened (by Arabs), tough, energetic, hard working, perseverant, courageous people and pioneers.

The approach adopted in this study was mainly that of selecting clips of the American media which were related to and could support the author’s hypothesis about the distortion and imbalance claim. However, the author classified the methods used to promote the imbalance and distorted image about Arabs as the following:

- (1) omission;
- (2) accepting terminology coined by Israelis such as “Palestinian” becomes “Arab terrorist”, “October War” becomes “Yom Kippur War”;
- (3) inaccurate information, for example, confusion between the location and knowledge of countries in some printed material about Arab affairs; and,
- (4) misleading headlines, neglect, burial and underpay.

The book quoted many examples of the above.

²³ Ghareeb, E. et al: *Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media*, American Arab Council, Washington, D.C. 1983.

The study concluded that the cultural gap between Arabs and Americans, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab failure to act and the American media are responsible for the negative image of Arabs in the American press.²⁴

In his paper, Lendenmann²⁵ analysed the work of Herblock and others in *The Washington Post*. Lendenmann presented two major themes which he believed to pervade Herblock's ideology concerning the events in the Middle East. One theme was that of Arab blackmail of the United States, usually in order to procure arms, through their oil. The other theme was "... the disreputableness of the Palestinians and the PLO, usually personified by Yassir Arafat."²⁶ Lendenmann presented and analysed many of Herblock's cartoons which he used to justify his hypothesis of the negative image of Arabs and Palestinians in the American press. However, Lendenmann did not present any other positive or neutral cartoons about the Arabs. It seems that the study lacked some of the objectivity which he was supposedly looking for.

Jack Shaheen's study of "The Arab Image in the American Mass Media"²⁷ started by presenting the following four questions.

- (1) Why is the stereotype so attractive?
- (2) Why is it easy to do?
- (3) Why do most people continue to accept it?
- (4) What steps should be taken to change this image?

²⁴ Ghareeb, E. 1983. P.495-506.

²⁵ Lendenmann, G.N.: "Arab Stereotyping in Contemporary American Political Cartoons" in Ghareeb, E. (ed): *Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media*, American Arab Council, Washington, D.C. 1983.

²⁶ Lendenmann, N. 1983. P.345.

²⁷ Shaheen, J.G.: "The Arab Image in American Mass Media" in Ghareeb, E.: *Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media*, American Arab Council, Washington, D.C. 1983.

The study concluded that the image of “Arabs” can be summarised by the following aspects:

- (1) Arabs are fabulously wealthy;
- (2) Arabs are barbaric and backward; and,
- (3) Arabs are sex-oriented with a penchant for Western women.²⁸

Shaheen’s paper addressed the issue of how the various sections of the American media programme the social system. In children’s cartoon programmes, Shaheen found that Arab characters are usually presented as the “bad” guy. One example is a cartoon story which showed Arab people giving watches as gifts, but the watches were time bombs.²⁹ In daily comic strips, which Shaheen believed attracted children, one of the favourite cartoon characters, Dennis the Menace, ridiculed Arab people. Dennis complained on Thanksgiving Day, “Dewey’s family’s havin’ meatloaf. His dad says some Arab is eating their turkey.”³⁰ In adult programmes such as wrestling shows, which appeal to adults more than to children, Arabs were presented in a negative way. For example, one night the television announcer presented Sheik Akabar The Great, and Abdullah The Butcher, as Arab wrestlers for the sheer pleasure of inflicting pain on others. What the announcer did not say was that the two wrestlers were not Arab but American.

Finally, the study made several statements about the duties of Arab people against such an image. This study, like the previous ones, did not

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.. p.328.

³⁰ Ibid..

follow any specific method. It appears that all the examples which Shaheen presented were selected instances which supported his ideas.

Another of the classic studies about the image of "Arabs" is Shaheen's book entitled "*The TV Arab*"³¹ The purpose of Shaheen's study was to emphasise man's need for fair play, not for a single group of misrepresented human beings. The data was collected during eight years of American TV programme observation. that Arabs were presented as extremely rich, generally barbaric and uncultured, oversexed and sex maniacs. Moreover, the study revealed that Arabs tend to be represented by TV writers as the following:

- (1) Arabs are buying up America;
- (2) OPEC is synonymous with Arab;
- (3) Iranians are Arabs;
- (4) all Arabs are Muslims;
- (5) Arabs are white slavers and uncivilised rulers of kingdoms;
- (6) all Palestinians are terrorists;
- (7) there is inter-Arab strife; and,
- (8) Arabs are the world's enemies.

Shaheen reached these general conclusions by observing and documenting more than one hundred television programmes which he divided into three kinds: dramas; docudramas documentaries; and, news. Also, these types of programmes were further divided into cultural programmes such as children's programmes, children and adult's programmes and adult programmes.

³¹ Shaheen, J.G.: *The TV Arab*, Popular Press, Bowling Green State University, Shaheen found Ohio. 1984

Shaheen believed that Arabs, like any race, have many positive features, that Arab misrepresentation on the American TV is due to a lack of knowledge of the culture and the background about Arabs, and that misrepresenting Arabs is easy and saves producers time. As one producer said,

“Everybody (e.g. TV producers) tends to think in terms of quick solutions. I think the tendency to target Arabs for fun and anger is very easy and is often done.”³²

NBC’s vice president believes that the press is one of the most important factors in the process of shaping images. Jerome Stanley, NBC’s vice president, said,

“Television entertainment producers, like news reporters, sometimes take their information from newspaper headlines, editorial cartoons and articles in magazines.”³³

Finally, Shaheen ended his study by assuming that the future of the TV Arab was unclear and that media representatives in Arab countries and the USA should co-operate to improve that image. Shaheen’s book, “*The TV Arab*”, is an expanded work of a previous paper (Shaheen, 1983). The hypotheses of the two studies of Shaheen are the same and the two conclusions are the same, namely that there are more negative images than positive ones. One criticism is that Shaheen did not present any fair or positive side of the TV Arab. Moreover, Shaheen himself seemed confused about the keyword of his study (Arab). He referred to some of the Islamic scholars as Arab while they belong to non-Arab, Muslim peoples. Despite this, “*The TV Arab*” can be

³² Shaheen, J. 1984. P.5.

³³ Ibid. p.6.

considered as one of the best qualitative studies about the Arab image on the American television in general.³⁴

*The Image of the Arabs in the Leading Articles of Three USA Daily Newspapers*³⁵ was the title of a study by Gazy Audian. The study's hypothesis was that there was an interchangeable relationship between the image of the Arabs and Israelis on the one side, and, the political relationship between the Arab countries and the USA on the other. Using a quantitative content analysis of 206 random leading articles from the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* between 1960-1982, the study found that the American papers presented the Arabs as terrorists and unfriendly. However, the study detected some changes in the overall image of the Arabs after 1973.

Like the previous study about the image of Arabs in the media, this study was very general. Also, the study did not treat one or two countries, instead, in very broad terms, it applied its findings in general to all Arab countries.

"Canadian Mass Media and the Middle East"³⁶ is a study about the image of Arabs, Islam and Palestinians on CTV (Canada's largest network) and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). The study argued that, "The image of Islam has three aspects: the image of Muslims, particularly the Shia, as religious fanatics; the association of Islam with violence; the link between

³⁴ Shaheen, J. 1984. P4-20.

³⁵ Audian, G.: *The Arab in the American Press*, Tihama Publishing Company, Jeddah. 1985.

³⁶ Naylor, C.: "Canadian Mass Media and the Middle East" in Ghareeb, E. (ed): *Split Vision: The Portrayal of the Arabs in the American Media*, American Arab Council, Washington, D.C. 1983.

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The study did not add any new insights, except that it collected and organised the existing data from various studies, but the major point which this study made supported Shaheen (1984) and Ghareeb's (1983) findings which concluded that the Western media presents Islam and Arabs in an unfavourable light. However, the writer presented his own recommendations for solving this phenomenon in that Arab and Muslim people should change their "weak" position because people always respect the strong.

Robert Hershman and Henry L Griggs, Jr,³⁹ as American foreign reporters, described the Arab countries or governments as angry, self-centred, distrustful, unco-operative, inaccessible, difficult to interact with and dull. In fact, they devoted most of their paper to Saudi Arabia which they saw as:

- (1) particularly frustrating;
- (2) "hell", as one news man described it;
- (3) worse than the communist states - it's easier to go to Libya than Saudi Arabia;
- (4) a crucial American ally;
- (5) racist on a religious basis; what made this crew different was that five of them were Muslim; and,
- (6) unable to understand what's good for it.⁴⁰

The above article concluded that journalists' access to the Arab countries and Saudi Arabia was the most important factor behind the imbalanced and distorted image of the countries and their people. I did not

³⁹ Hershman, R. and Griggs, H.L.Jr.: "American Television News and the Middle East", *Middle East Journal*. 1981. Vol. 35, P. 461-480.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*.

locate any positive incident which the writers encountered in any Arab country or in Saudi Arabia.

Studying the quality, quantity and the bias in reporting Israel's invasion into Lebanon in 1982, Paraschos and Rutherford did a quantitative analysis of 147 evening newscast transcripts from ABC, NBC and CBS during the period between June 1982 - August 1982. The study concluded that ABC had the most favourable assertions towards the PLO while CBS had those most unfavourable to Israel. Further, the study showed NBC as the most balanced network towards the PLO.⁴¹

A study was conducted by Dougherty and Warden⁴² of the 'quality' press editorial articles about the Middle East during the 11 crisis years. Unsigned articles underwent content analysis from four prestige American newspapers; *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Dougherty and Warden concluded that the overall attitude of those articles were "... rather monolithic nor invariable over 11 years of Arab-Israeli crisis from 1967-1977.⁴³

Analysing the content of eleven elite newspapers between 1966 - 1974, Robert H Trice found that editorials in these newspapers tended to be critical of the policy and actions of the Palestinians. Further, criticism of Arabs and support of Israel was weaker than expected. However, he found the American

⁴¹ Paraschos, M. and Rutherford, B.: "Network News Coverage of the Invasion of Lebanon", *Journalism Quarterly*. 1985. Vol. 62, No. 3. P. 457-464.

⁴² Dougherty, D. and Warden, M.: "Prestige Press Editorial Treatment of the Middle East During 11 Crisis Years", *Journalism Quarterly*. 1979. Vol. 56, No. 4, P. 776-782.

⁴³ Dougherty, D., Warden, M. 1979. P.776.

editor in the selected papers to be more supportive of Israel than of the Arab countries.

Coding a total of 2,924 editorial items about the Arab-Israeli conflict issue, Trice added that his data supported the hypothesis which is based on the imbalance and distortion of reporting from Third World countries. He found that during a non-crisis period, the area received less attention, "... even the most significant issues will be at a disadvantage."⁴⁴

However, Trice suggested that if the period of his study was extended to cover 1987, he would assume that more support for Israeli and Arab governments such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan would emerge. Like the other reviewed studies, Trice examined the Arab image in relation to the Israeli conflict on the one hand, and in relation to American policy on the other. Even though the study suggested the importance of the cultural factor, the study is based on the American mainstream behavioural tradition.

The above studies indicate that the Western media, as represented by the USA and Canada, often presented a negative and unfavourable image of the Arab countries, especially the USA. Saudi Arabia, which has been implied within the term "Arab", is not an exceptional case as it is sometimes attached to the most unfavourable or negative images. This is clear in relation to cultural images such as that of women and social life. For instance, when considering the image of the "Arab" in the Western media in relation to the treatment of women as a variable, Saudi Arabia is considered one of the worst Arab countries.

⁴⁴ Trice, R.H.: "The American Elite Press and the Arab-Israeli Conflict", *Middle East Journal*. 1979. Vol. 33, P. 304-325.

There are, however, several methodological weaknesses in the American studies which make them not very useful as a comparative yardstick for studying the interrelated image of "Arabs" and Saudi Arabia in the British press.

These studies have tried to analyse a single stereo-typical image of the "Arab" because the researchers believe in the sameness of "Arabs", disregarding political, cultural and economic differences. I believe this cannot be achieved, especially when considering the broad terms the studies used such as "Arab" and "Islam". For example, "Arab" is a term which is used for people in different countries with different backgrounds. All the studies substantially equated the image of the "Arab", as specifically emerging in the context of the Palestinians in relationship to the Israelis, to "Arabs" in general. This has led to over-generalisations. In media terms, the studies adopted a simplified 'gate-keeper' theory in terms of news' organisation and journalists' attitudes, and assumed that specifically American professional practices and cultural assumptions amongst their news-media were generally true of all the "Western" media. This is clearly a major over-simplification. Nevertheless, these studies have been an important step in our understanding of the image of Saudi Arabia. More studies covering the media of other social and cultural systems, such as that of Britain and of Continental Europe, are needed before broader generalisations can be validly drawn.

CHAPTER TWO

THE OIL CRISIS

THE 'OIL CRISIS'

2.1 PRELUDE: 19 SEPTEMBER 1973 - 16 OCTOBER 1973

The sample period for the 'oil crisis' stage in the development of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British press covers the eight weeks between 13 September to 13 November 1973. The 'Oil Crisis' itself can be defined as having broken out on 17 October when the official announcement was made at the Kuwait conference that oil was to be used as a weapon in the war with Israel. The first section of this chapter will, therefore, analyse the image of Saudi Arabia as it existed before the crisis, as shown in the coverage of the British press during the four weeks leading up to the announcement.

This period is intersected by one main event, namely, the sudden outbreak of the war between the Arabs and Israel on 6 October 1973. During the two weeks prior to it, no major events occurred, and this allows the examination of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British Press from different perspectives. Prior to the oil crisis, which resulted in a major extension, and indeed changes, in some aspects of the image of Saudi Arabia, there were the following three central and settled images.

- a) Saudi Arabia as belonging to the 'conservative', 'moderate' and 'developing' categories;
- b) Saudi Arabia as a supporter of the Arab countries (Egypt and Syria); and,
- c) Saudi Arabia as an oil power country.

a) Saudi Arabia as belonging to the 'conservative', 'moderate' and 'developing' categories

Dividing the world into categories and sub-categories might be a universal phenomenon but "such divisions - always come about when one society or culture thinks about another one, as different from it."⁴⁵

According to the British papers, Saudi Arabia is regarded as belonging to the "... developing, under populated Middle Eastern ..."⁴⁶ culture of the world. Economically, the Saudi Arabians were seen to be among those who have, against '...those who have not ...',⁴⁷ financial resources.

Based on oil resources, Saudi Arabia's oil wealth was portrayed as one of the '...twentieth century Arabian nights...'⁴⁸ However, with an income of £55,600 million per year, the British journalists saw Saudi Arabia as "... one of the richest and most powerful ..."⁴⁹ countries in the world, or "... the head of the richest Arab oil states."⁵⁰ Thus, according to the British journalists, the major problem that faced Saudi Arabia was that of knowing "... what to do with snow-balling capital."⁵¹ One journalist formulated the following question: 'How can Saudi Arabia spend it?'⁵²

⁴⁵ Said, W. Edward. 1981: p.4.

⁴⁶ Cairncross, Frances. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.18. See also: Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

⁴⁷ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 24 September 1973. p.viii.

⁴⁸ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 24 September 1973. p.viii.

⁴⁹ Cairncross, Frances. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.18.

⁵⁰ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.36.

⁵¹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 24 September 1973. p.viii. See also Staff. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.10.

⁵² Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5. See also Staff. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.14.

In terms of ideology, the British journalists viewed Saudi Arabia as having a "... profession of Arabism and a devotion to Islam."⁵³ Moreover, Saudi Arabia was seen as the "...ultimate traditionalist Monarchy ..."⁵⁴, "... the most moderate ..."⁵⁵ and an "... anti-communist ..." country⁵⁶ compared to the "... militant ..."⁵⁷, "... revolutionary..."⁵⁸ Arab regimes such as Iraq and Libya.

From an Arab-Israeli conflict perspective, the British press placed Saudi Arabia within the categories of those Arab countries who are "... farther afield... from... Israel compared to Israel's immediate neighbours..."⁵⁹ such as Syria and Jordan.

b) Saudi Arabia as a Supporter of Arab countries

The second main image of Saudi Arabia to emerge is its role as a supporter of other Arab countries. During the October War, Egypt and Syria received a considerable amount of Saudi Arabian support of more than one kind. One of them was a political type of support. Most of the British journalists went so far as to claim that Egypt and Syria would not have started the October war without counting on "... a long-term policy with Saudi Arabia backing to apply economic and political pressure..."⁶⁰ on the west. Likewise, David Bell of the Financial Times, felt that the Egyptian leaders "... would not have pressed ahead without Saudi support."⁶¹ In the same vein, Paul Martin of

⁵³ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.2.

⁵⁴ Silver, David. *The Guardian*. 20 September 1973. p.3.

⁵⁵ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.17.

⁵⁶ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 28 September 1973. p.2.

⁵⁷ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

⁵⁸ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 20 September 1973. p.3.

⁵⁹ Lowry, Suzanne. *The Guardian*. 10 October 1973. p.15.

⁶⁰ Dullforce, William. *Financial Times*. 8 October 1973. p.12.

⁶¹ Bell, David. *Financial Times*. 8 October 1973. p.1.

The Times, reported the Saudi Arabian's leader, then King Faisal, and his ministers as "... voicing their support for President Sadat of Egypt in his struggle against Israel."⁶² Moreover, when King Faisal promised all his country's potential and capabilities to support Egypt, *The Times* explained such promises as "... a hint that he might use the so-called-oil weapon ..."⁶³ as political pressure. Saudi Arabia's important role in the war decision was highlighted by David Hirst of *The Guardian* who claimed that Sadat and Assad, the Presidents of Egypt and Syria respectively, had "... informed no other Arab leaders, with the possible exception of King Faisal , of their plan to go to war."⁶⁴

However, as far as the British 'quality' press suggests, it was just such a threat to use the oil as a weapon which allowed Saudi Arabia to play an important role, not only within the Arab world, but also in American policy towards the Middle East in general, and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. *The Guardian* journalist, Peter Hillmore, held that Saudi Arabia's mention of oil as a political weapon was aimed at "...modifying the USA's policy towards Israel and forcing American foreign policy to be pro-Arab over a long period of time."⁶⁵ Along the same lines, Anthony Thomas of *The Times* believed that "... evidence of an important shift in United States policy in the Middle East to force a new special relationship with Saudi Arabia, a country with almost bottomless oil reserves, is becoming overwhelming."⁶⁶ This conclusion was based on a succession of commercial and diplomatic initiatives between the USA and Saudi Arabia to grant oil supplies continually from the latter to the former. Moreover, *The Guardian* leader of 16 October stated that, "American

⁶² Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.7.5.

⁶³ Staff. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.1.

⁶⁴ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 10 October 1973. p.1.

⁶⁵ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 8 October 1973. p.1.

⁶⁶ Thomas, Anthony. *The Times*. 1 October 1973. p.21.

attitudes to the Middle East ... had been modified by Saudi Arabia's implicit threat of oil embargo."⁶⁷

Saudi Arabia's decision to mobilise army reserves and cancel all army leave during the first days of the war was highlighted in the British Press. To lessen the importance of Saudi Arabia's participation, an unidentified source in the *Financial Times* presumed "... that the Saudi order only cover[ed] Saudi forces stationed in Jordan since 1967."⁶⁸ John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* believed that, "One of the more remarkable aspects of this fourth round of the continuing Middle East war has been the real and practical co-operation among all the Arab states." However, he pointed out that this time was unlike the empty promises made but never carried out in 1967. Saudi Arabia had "...mobilised reservists and cancelled all army leave."⁶⁹ The *Financial Times* correspondent, Ihsan Hijazi, also reported that, 'Saudi forces are on full alert and all military leave has been cancelled.' This information was coupled with a claim that King Faisal had said that "... if Arab successes continued ... Jordan, with Saudi assistance should take the necessary steps for 'liberating Jerusalem.'⁷⁰

The decision to send Saudi Arabian military forces to support the Syrian troops against Israel on the Northern front, provoked many reactions from British journalists, which helps to further illuminate the image of Saudi Arabia's government and people. For example, David Hirst, of *The Guardian*, believed that such forces carried more of a political warning than a military consequence.⁷¹ Furthermore, Hirst emphasised the religious aspect behind

⁶⁷ Staff. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.14.

⁶⁸ Staff. *Financial Times*. 9 October 1973. p.7.

⁶⁹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 October 1973. p.8.

⁷⁰ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 11 October 1973. p.8.

⁷¹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. See also

Saudi Arabia's move as he referred in his article to the Saudi Arabian royal proclamation that, "Saudi Arabian blood must be mixed with other blood for the sake of the occupied land and the holy places."⁷² He also related the Saudi Arabian's decision to send military forces to the news of the destruction of 44 aircraft and 150 Israeli tanks by the Egyptian forces,⁷³ which might imply that the Saudi Arabian forces were not only insignificant, but were also unable to engage in an unassured, uneasy battle.

Besides Saudi Arabia's image as a political and military supporter of Arab countries, the majority of the British press highlighted the image of Saudi Arabia as an arms supplier or 'transfer' point for arms equipment to Egypt and Syria in their war against Israel. With regard to this, Henry Stanhope of *The Times* claimed that the special helicopter which Saudi Arabia bought from the UK was "... expected to be transferred to Egypt."⁷⁴ Likewise, David Hirst of *The Guardian* wrote that "... not all the arms that King Faisal is now acquiring is he going to keep to himself ...".⁷⁵ Another role which was played by Saudi Arabia, in addition to that of 'transferring' arms, was that of acting as an "... intermediary in fortifying the Arab armies with needed weapons."⁷⁶ This image of Saudi Arabia, especially that of transferring its arms to other Arab countries, was a very sensitive one which could have influenced the decision-making process of future arms sales to Saudi Arabia by manufacturing countries.

The image of Saudi Arabia as a provider of financial support to Egypt and Syria was the fourth type of Saudi Arabian support to Arab countries

Staff. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.1.

⁷² Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.2.

⁷³ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.1.

⁷⁴ Stanhope, Henry. *The Times*. 21 September 1973. p.9.

⁷⁵ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 28 September 1973 p.2.

⁷⁶ Staff. *The Times*. 12 October 1973. p.1.

which was highlighted by most of the British press. For instance, to show the importance and validity of enlisting Saudi Arabia's financial support, John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* believed that the Egyptian leader “ ... had to ensure that Faisal was willing to put the money ... and to increase the amount vastly...”⁷⁷, as he planned to go to war. Moreover, *The Times* believed that the Egyptian leader was “... counting on continued financial support from Saudi Arabia should the battle develop into a long and gruelling war.”⁷⁸ David Hirst of *The Guardian*, explained the official statement of the Saudi Arabian government to put its resources at the service of the battle to mean ‘money’ and he believed that Saudi Arabia furnished 300 million pounds to Egypt for the war effort.⁷⁹

c) The Image of the Oil Aspect of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has proven oil resources of over 170 billion barrels, of 25% of the world's known oil, and is capable of producing up to 12.2 million barrels per day, or more than 40% of the oil production of all the Gulf States combined.⁸⁰

Saudi Arabia's policy concerning this “... huge oil reserve...”⁸¹, or this ‘... bottomless oil reserve...’⁸² as commonly described by the British press, was seen to be based on not mixing oil with politics. The *Daily Telegraph* wrote that in the Saudi Arabian government, there “... has been a reluctance to use oil in the past...”⁸³ for exerting political pressure. In the past, the Saudi

⁷⁷ Bulloch, John: *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.18.

⁷⁸ Staff. *The Times*. 10 October 1973. p.1.

⁷⁹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.2.

⁸⁰ Quandt, W. 1981. p.178.

⁸¹ Heren, Louis. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.16.

⁸² Thomas, Anthony. *The Times*. 1 October 1973. p.21.

⁸³ Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 October 1973. p.8.

Arabians had "... refused to contemplate such a policy at all..."⁸⁴ when asked by other Arab countries to use oil as a political weapon to advance the "Arab" cause. Eric Silver of *The Guardian* argued along the same lines, as he quoted an unidentified Israeli source who underlined that the Saudi Arabian leader, King Faisal, "... refused as steadfastly as his predecessor to mix oil and politics."⁸⁵ According to Adrian Hamilton of the *Financial Times* "... the world's hope for substantial increase in oil supplies..."⁸⁶ to prevent the development of an international supply crisis shortage, rested on the image of Saudi Arabia as having both such quantities of oil and such a policy. However, in the period between the "Arab" defeat heralded Israel's pre-eruptive air strike in 1967 and the outbreak of the October War in 1973, several factors influenced Saudi Arabia's oil policy for a limited period of time.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the world's oil conditions, compared to previous years, showed an increase in the demand for oil as a source of energy compared to other sources. Moreover, oil producers convinced themselves that it was not economically beneficial for them to over-produce oil. Furthermore,, high dependency on imported oil, particularly by western-leaning Japan, and the USA convinced Arab leaders, who had lost territory to Israel and faced increasing domestic tension, that, "Oil could supplement military force as a weapon in the Arab struggle."⁸⁷ This should convince the consumer countries to press Israel for a political solution. In addition, Saudi Arabia warned both in private and in public of its unwillingness to increase oil production just to satisfy the industrialised countries, particularly the USA, the main supporter of Israel, unless they used their influence over Israel to

⁸⁴ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 27 September 1973. p.8.

⁸⁵ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

⁸⁶ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 8 October 1973. p.29.

⁸⁷ Staff. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.17.

withdraw from Arab lands.⁸⁸ This combination was undoubtedly in the minds of the Egyptian and Syrian leaders when they decided to move their troops across the 1967 line and started the fourth Arab-Israeli war on 6 October, 1973.

After the war broke out, the image of Saudi Arabia portrayed by the British press revolved around the oil issue more than other issues and overshadowed the other aspects of Saudi Arabia which were discussed in the previous pages. However, even though it was believed that other Arab oil-producing countries participated in playing the 'oil' card, Saudi Arabia came to be seen as having a vital position among the oil producing countries in general, and Arab countries in particular, owing to the vast oil reserves and selectively much higher technical production capabilities. These features convinced James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph* to propose that without Saudi Arabia's backing, any decision to stop western and American oil exportation by other Arab states "... would have little effect."⁸⁹ Adrian Hamilton of the *Financial Times* also wrote an article in this vein, stating that, "It is the Middle Eastern producers, and particularly the reserve-strong countries like Saudi Arabia, who hold most of the cards and that time will only strengthen their hand, with all the problems of raising prices, excess revenues and political ramifications that this implies."⁹⁰

Saudi Arabia's oil policy image was now portrayed as a "...sophisticated policy based on playing the 'oil card' as a long term economic weapon to exert political pressure."⁹¹ To support such a view, the *Daily Telegraph* journalist,

⁸⁸ Thomas, Anthony. *The Times*. 1 October 1973. p.21.

⁸⁹ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.36.

⁹⁰ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 1 October 1973. p.14.

⁹¹ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 17 October 1973. p.8.

Michael Hilton, reported that Mr. Otto N. Miller, Chairman of Standard Oil Company in Saudi Arabia, said in a letter to his shareholders that American foreign policy should pay more attention to the Arab state. In addition, Hilton was convinced that the company "... [had] had advance warning of King Faisal's intention of reducing expansion of Saudi Arabian output from 30 per cent to 10 per cent a year."⁹² *The Times'* editor's commentary on the October War proposed that Saudi Arabia, "... had found a subtle and not ineffective way of using oil as a lever ... which might in time have had some effect ... on the political situation in the Middle East."⁹³ Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* assumed that Saudi Arabian oil policy "... had been a slow acting one with the aim of forcing America's foreign policy over a long period (of time)."⁹⁴

It is clear that Saudi Arabia had been threatening to use oil as a weapon against the Western countries in general and the USA in particular but the Saudi Arabians imposed such a threat in a moderate way compared to other countries. While other Arab countries pressed for extreme measures in applying the oil threat and asked for "...a complete halt in supplies...,"⁹⁵ Saudi Arabia stood for a more moderate approach

Regarding this matter, James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph* believed that Saudi Arabia, felt "... the threat of a ban may be more beneficial to the Arab cause." Also, he assumed that the Saudi Arabians thought that, "... a complete halt in supplies might have the opposite of the desired effect and harden American support for Israel."⁹⁶ Along the same lines, Ihsan Hijazi, of the *Financial Times*, reported that Saudi Arabian officials were known to be

⁹² Hilton, Michael. *Daily Telegraph*. 25 September 1973. p.15.

⁹³ Staff: *The Times*. 8 Oct. '73. p.17.

⁹⁴ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.17.

⁹⁵ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.36.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

opposed to the ideas of cutting off the oil altogether, but he felt that the measures should be applied discriminately so that countries which had been taking a favourable stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict should not be punished.⁹⁷ Therefore prior to the Kuwait oil conference, James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph*, stressed that Saudi Arabia was not “... expected to take the extreme step of cutting off supplies to America.” Nonetheless, it was assumed that Saudi Arabia's stand at the conference “... might [be to] carry out an earlier threat and freeze supplies.”⁹⁸

However, as pressure on Saudi Arabia increased from other Arab countries, the Saudi Arabians were seen to take a relatively more hard-line policy compared to their initial stand regarding the oil supply. David Hirst of *The Guardian*, proposed that the Saudi Arabians “... were anxious for only a token cutback as a warning to the USA and the West.”⁹⁹

2.2 REASONS BEHIND THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN OIL POLICY

According to the view presented by British journalists, the main reasons behind Saudi Arabia's threat to use oil as a political weapon against the Western countries and the USA were stopping “Arab” humiliation, reaching a settlement in the Middle East, the return of Jerusalem and “Arab” lands and economic benefits.. Anthony Thomas' article in *The Times* argued that the essential aim of Saudi Arabia in politicising its oil policy, even before the war started, was “... to deter Israel from future humiliation of Arab countries.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in the same paper, two days after the war began, Paul Martin of *The*

⁹⁷ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 12 October 1973. p.8.

⁹⁸ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.36.

⁹⁹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.8.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, Anthony. *The Times*. 1 October 1973. p.21.

Times interpreted Saudi Arabia's "... full support to Egypt and Syria...", as mentioned in King Faisal's telegram to Dr. Henry Kissinger, as a warning to the USA that, "... should the Arabs suffer another defeat then it would scarcely be possible for Saudi Arabia to maintain its pro-American policy."¹⁰¹ Even so, as the writer stated, Saudi Arabia "... made no direct threat to cut oil to the west..." in this telegram.¹⁰² Further, Louis Heren of *The Times*, assumed that Saudi Arabia's intention, among others, was to "... wipe out the humiliation of 1967 on the Arab countries."¹⁰³ The Saudi Arabians believed that further humiliation would increase the strength of the radical regimes in the region.

The British press also underlined the importance of the return of Arab lands, in general, and Jerusalem in particular, as the price for the Saudi Arabians not using the oil weapon. Richard Johns, of the *Financial Times*, believed that Saudi Arabia had "...set implementations of UN resolution 242 ... as the price for not using the 'oil weapon' against the USA"¹⁰⁴ Earlier, in the same paper he had indicated that Saudi Arabia would be willing to increase oil exports to the USA, if the USA "... created the right political climate" in the Middle East."¹⁰⁵ Harold Sieve, of the *Daily Telegraph*, held that King Faisal and other Gulf oil countries were "...[planning] to turn the heat on the fuel-hungry west, so it [would] insist on Tel-Aviv coming to terms."¹⁰⁶

Saudi Arabia was seen to hold an unfavourable attitude towards communist ideology and the countries which represented such an ideology. This attitude stressed the favourable stand of Saudi Arabia towards the

¹⁰¹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.7.

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ Heren, Louis. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.16.

¹⁰⁴ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 27 September 1973. p.8.

¹⁰⁵ Reuter. *Financial Times*. 26 September 1973. p.8.

¹⁰⁶ Sieve, Harold. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 October 1973. p.15.

Western camp in general, and towards the United States in particular. But, when it came to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Saudi Arabians were seen to hold an uncertain position by standing in the same camp as pro-communist countries such as Syria and Libya against Israel and the pro-Western and USA allies' camps. It would seem, however, that in public and private comments, Saudi Arabia "... left no doubt that continu[ed] unquestioning United States' support for Israel was unacceptable and indicated [that it] would put a ceiling on oil output unless the American government pursued a more even-handed policy in the area."¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Adrian Hamilton of the *Financial Times*, pointed out Saudi Arabia's warning to the USA that, "...it might be forced to curb the rise in its vital oil production unless a settlement is reached in the Middle East."¹⁰⁸

Thus, when the October War started, Paul Martin of *The Times* wrote that Saudi Arabia had "...made it clear of late that it [was] ready to use its oil as an element of pressure against Israel."¹⁰⁹ Louis Heren in the same paper commented that, based on its huge oil reserve and in spite of its 'moderation' compared to other Arab, radical regimes, Saudi Arabia "... want[ed] to retrieve occupied Arab lands taken in 1967."¹¹⁰ In a comprehensive comment, *The Guardian's* Peter Hillmore underlined the Saudi Arabian's oil policy which connected the increase in oil production to satisfy industrial countries to several related conditions. According to Hillmore, the Saudi Arabians want "... America to respond favourably to the legitimate Arab demands, stop its support of Israel, and force it to withdraw from occupied Arab land and to repatriate the Palestinian people to their homeland as the price for increasing oil

¹⁰⁷ Thomas, Anthony. *The Times*. 11 October 1973. p.21.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 8 October 1973. p.29. See also Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 15 October 1973. p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.7.

¹¹⁰ Heren, Louis. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.16.

production in Saudi Arabia ... to meet growing American demand.”¹¹¹ *The Times* highlighted the change in Saudi Arabia's oil policy. The paper explained that Saudi Arabia, the country “... upon whom the United States [would] depend in any energy crisis, gave a warning of the consequences of continued American support for Israel.” The Saudi Arabian government announced that it was unable to “... maintain its friendship with America...” if the USA “... did not adopt a stance more favourable to the Arab.”¹¹²

At the same time that some British journalists were concentrating on the return of “Arab” lands and the cessation of “Arab” humiliation by Israel, others highlighted the ideological Islamic religion as the aspect of Saudi Arabia which was the factor behind the Saudi Arabians decision to use and politicise their oil resources. In an article entitled, Faisal settles for Arabism, David Hirst of *The Guardian*, discussed the Islamic dimension in Saudi Arabia's unexpected decision to use its oil as a political weapon. Although a royal proclamation had previously announced that Saudi Arabian blood must be mixed with other “Arab” blood for the sake of the occupied lands and the holy places¹¹³, there was no mention of an oil embargo. Saudi Arabia's promise to Arab countries to put “... all her resources at the service of battle...”¹¹⁴ was however, interpreted by Hirst as a threat of an oil embargo. Similarly, *The Times* proposed that Saudi Arabia was “...second to none in [its] determination to achieve a settlement favourable to the Arabs and to defend in particular the holy places of Islam, including Jerusalem.”¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 8 October 1973. p.1. See also Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.17.

¹¹² Staff. *The Times*. 10 October 1973. p.1.

¹¹³ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.2.

¹¹⁴ Staff. *The Times*. 16 October 1973. p.10.

¹¹⁵ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

From among the British journalists, only Eric Silver of *The Guardian* discussed the economic benefits behind the Saudi Arabian's decision to use their oil as a form of political pressure. A ceiling on an increase in oil production would not only threaten the industrial countries into pressuring Israel, but would also increase demand over supply and thus increase the price. Eric Silver supported his argument with a quotation from an unidentified Israeli analyst who believed that Saudi Arabia "... need[ed] to apply the squeeze anyhow and ... might as well make the most of it." Furthermore, the unidentified Israeli source stated that, "...the recent emphasis - in the statement by the king and his advisers - has been much more on the economic, rather than the diplomatic, things Washington can do to keep the oil flowing."¹¹⁶

2.3 CONCLUSION

Up until the Kuwait conference, the overall image of Saudi Arabia in the British press was that of a favoured country compared with other Arab countries. It was seen as a moderate and conservative country, amongst what was seen to be typically militant and hawkish regimes, with radical tendencies and was anti-communist and pro-Western in orientation. Saudi Arabia was seen as playing only a supporting role, principally financially, behind Egypt and Syria which were seen as the driving forces amongst the Arab countries. Its potential for influence in that capacity was well recognised, but was seen more as potential than an actuality, which derived from its large oil reserves, output and income.

The Saudi Arabian oil policy was seen as built on "not mixing oil with politics". Once the war broke out the Saudi Arabians began to be seen as

¹¹⁶ *ibid*

considering changing their policy, at least to some extent, and to be making veiled threats to use their oil resources as a political weapon in support of the Arab countries involved in the fighting, but this was only in a very moderate way compared to what other Arab oil states might have wanted to do. Thus the Saudi Arabians were usually reported as speaking of the oil 'threat' in the context of an 'unwillingness' to increase future oil production rather than meaning they would reduce or halt the flow of oil altogether. Saudi Arabia was seen as probably likely to support the other more hawkish oil states in a moderate application of the idea of an 'oil weapon' in the belief that without it, the USA might increase its support for Israel, when for the first time the Arab forces were in the ascendancy.

THE 'OIL CRISIS' AND ITS AFTERMATH: 17 OCTOBER 1973 - 14 NOVEMBER 1973

2.1.1 THE KUWAIT CONFERENCE

During the second week of the October War, by which time the tide had turned against the Arab, representatives of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria met in Kuwait on the 17th October, 1973, and agreed to reduce their oil production by at least five percent from their average September output. They also agreed to make a further cut of five percent every month thereafter until Israel withdrew from the occupied territories.¹¹⁷

The Kuwait conference of the Arab oil producing countries stimulated a large reaction in the British Press. The role of Saudi Arabia in the development of the 'oil weapon' and its influence through it in the October war, came to alter significantly the perception of both Saudi Arabia and King Faisal in the British Press.

2.1.2 FROM 'MODERATE' TO 'HARD LINE'

Saudi Arabia's role during the Kuwait conference evoked various, and sometimes contradictory, images of Saudi Arabia in the British press according to the perspective of each journalist. Thus, David Housego of the *Financial Times*, who believed that "... oil was dramatically thrown into the Middle East conflict..." as a result of the Kuwait conference, wrote that "...

¹¹⁷ *Strategic Survey 1973*. IISS publication. p.99.

the measure is far more draconian than even the gloomiest forecast ... had predicted.” He was convinced that “... the desire of the moderate Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia ... was evidently swept aside”¹¹⁸ In contrast, Peter Hillmore of the *The Guardian*, who saw the measure as “... far less dramatic than had been feared”, believed that “... the more moderate states had won the day.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, Paul Martin of *The Times*, who saw the Arab oil-cut plan “... as a subtle use of the oil weapon”, believed the measure to “... have been inspired by Saudi Arabia”,¹²⁰ the country which sees oil as a long term economic weapon.

One day after the Kuwait Conference, Saudi Arabia reduced its oil production by 10%. The *Daily Telegraph*, which did not comment on Saudi Arabia's role during the Kuwait meeting, described the cut in Saudi Arabia's oil production as an “... escalation of the oil-weapon diplomacy.” The paper added that it “... was an unexpected move...” because Saudi Arabia “... had argued for moderation in the use of the oil weapon...”¹²¹ before the Arab meeting in Kuwait. Likewise, James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph* claimed that “...Arab sources were taken aback...” by the Saudi Arabian decision because it was the Saudi Arabians who “... had argued for moderation”¹²² in applying the “oil weapon” before and during the Kuwait meeting.

Adrian Hamilton, of the *Financial Times* maintained that the 10% cut in Saudi Arabian oil production had brought 'uncertainty' to oil supplies

¹¹⁸ Housego, David. *Financial Times*. 18 October 1973. p.1.

¹¹⁹ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 18 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁰ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 18 October 1973. p.8.

¹²¹ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²² Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

because Saudi Arabia was "... the world's largest exporter of oil."¹²³ In the same vein, Roger Vielroye of *The Times* predicted that the decision had "...worsened the oil supply crisis..." because Saudi Arabia was "... the biggest oil producer in the Middle East."¹²⁴

2.1.3 THREATENING AMERICA

The British journalists who reported the Saudi Arabian decision agreed that the reason behind the move was to modify America's policy towards the war. Roger Vielroye of *The Times*, claimed that Saudi Arabia had "... threatened a total halt of Saudi oil shipments to the United States unless the government modified its present position in the Middle East war".¹²⁵ Peter Hillmore of the *The Guardian* stated that King Faisal had said that, "If President Nixon ..(did).. not modify his position towards Israel, Saudi Arabia .. (would).. stop the flow of oil to America."¹²⁶ Also, James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Saudi Arabia had announced that "... all oil exports to the United States would cease if American support for Israel did not stop."¹²⁷ On the same day, the *Daily Telegraph* suggested that the Saudi Arabian's 10% production cut was "... in protest at America's support of Israel in the Middle East."¹²⁸ Moreover, Adrian Hamilton of the *Financial Times* argued that the Saudi Arabian "... move was accompanied by the threat that Saudi Arabia would stop the flow of oil to the U.S. if it did not modify its position on Israel."¹²⁹

¹²³ Hamilton, Adrian. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁴ Vielroye, Roger, *The Times*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 19 October 1973. p.2. See also Staff. *The Guardian*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁷ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁸ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹²⁹ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

Unlike the other papers, the *Daily Telegraph* saw the Saudi Arabian additional cut in oil production as a response to Egyptian 'pressure' which the paper claimed had "... led to Saudi Arabia's harder line."¹³⁰ In the same paper, James Wightman suggested that, "There was conjecture that Saudi Arabia had received demands from Egypt yesterday to take a sterner line."¹³¹

The Saudi Arabian agreement to participate in the Kuwait decision to reduce their oil production by 5%, and then the decision to cut it by 10%, might reflect what was going on at the battle front between Egypt, Syria and Israel. On 16 October, 1973, Golda Meier, Israel's Prime Minister, announced that, "Israeli forces were fighting on the west side of the Suez Canal."¹³² This meant that in response to the change in the war in favour of Israel, Saudi Arabia was expected to do something to improve the situation through the use of the "oil weapon".

2.1.4 OIL POLICY AFTER THE CEASE-FIRE

The United States ignored King Faisal's 'threat' to halt oil supplies if it would not modify its policy towards the Middle East war and instead 'insulted' the King, who was known as 'America's best friend', by approving a \$2.2 billion aid package to Israel. King Faisal reacted on 20 October, 1973, with an order of a "... total ban on oil to the U.S." This decision should be seen as one of the most vital decisions in the history of

¹³⁰ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹³¹ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

¹³² Nadav, Safran. 1988. p.158.

Saudi-American relations and the oil industry as it had "... a consequence ... on Saudi Arabia's position, [and] indeed, on its destiny."¹³³

In spite of this, the Saudi Arabian's decision did not receive adequate coverage in any of the four papers. This might lead us to suppose that the papers acted within the interests of the Western countries who did not want to amplify and then encourage the escalation of the use of the "oil weapon". Alternatively, the reason might simply have been that when news of the Saudi Arabian decision broke out on Saturday, 20 October, it was too late for the papers to print the story on the same day and by Monday, 22 October, the story might have lost its news worthiness to the other media, or to other events, such as the cease fire agreement.¹³⁴

2.1.5 SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL POLICY AFTER THE KUWAIT MEETING

On 22 October, 1973, the United Nation's Security Council passed Resolution 338 calling for a cease-fire, which was accepted by Egypt and Israel and later by Syria. However, in spite of the cease-fire, Saudi Arabia neither removed the oil embargo on the USA, nor reversed the general cutback in its oil production. The British press reported that in spite of the cease-fire agreement, King Faisal had announced that Saudi Arabian troops would "...remain on the Syrian front under Syrian command and remain bound by its cause."¹³⁵ Therefore, Saudi Arabia stood for the following:

¹³³ Nadav, Safran. 1988. p.152.

¹³⁴ The *Sunday Times* reported but did not make much of the Saudi Arabian decision over the weekend.

¹³⁵ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 25 October 1973. p.1.

- a) the withdrawal of Israel from Arab lands;
- b) the recovery of East Jerusalem to Arab control; and,
- c) the recognition of Palestinian rights.

a) Withdrawal of Israel

David Hirst of *The Guardian* interpreted the Saudi Arabian announcement to mean that, "... for King Faisal, though there has been a cease-fire on the shooting front, there has been none on the economic one...", because Saudi Arabia was "...still insisting on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories."¹³⁶ Robert Graham of the *Financial Times* wrote that, "The Saudis insisted that the cutback [in oil] would remain in force until Israeli forces had been withdrawn from occupied Arab territory."¹³⁷ Similarly, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times*, who based his report on the weekly Lebanese periodical *Al-Diyar*, argued that King Faisal had said that, "This country will continue the suspension of oil exports to the U.S. and cut back production until ... Israel withdraws from occupied Arab territory."¹³⁸ On the occasion of Dr. Henry Kissinger's visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss the end of the oil embargo, Hijazi pointed out that sources "... doubt that there would be any weakening in King Faisal's determination to maintain the oil pressure until Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territory has been fulfilled."¹³⁹ William Dullforce of the *Financial Times* was assured by sources "... that there [would] be no easing of oil restrictions until occupied Arab territory ha[d] been recovered."¹⁴⁰

136

Ibid.

137

Graham, Robert. *Financial Times*. 26 October 1973. p.10.

138

Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 29 October 1973. p.7.

139

Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 1 November 1973. p.8. See also 10 November 1973. p.14.

140

Dullforce, William, *Financial Times*. 6 November 1973. p.8.

Paul Martin of *The Times* went so far as to depict Saudi Arabia as, “The most militant Arab country in the prosecution of the oil war...”, because King Faisal of Saudi Arabia “... ha[d] declared that his embargo on oil and the overall oil production cut [would] remain in force until Israel withdraws from occupied Arab territory.”¹⁴¹ Peter Gill of the *Daily Telegraph* held that King Faisal “... [was] understood to have made it plain [to the Americans] that he [would] settle for nothing less than the return of all occupied territories.”¹⁴² Along the same lines, *The Guardian* reported that “... Saudi Arabia [would] maintain its embargo against oil shipments to the U.S. until Israel withdraws from all Arab lands ... conquered in the 1967 war.”¹⁴³

b) Recovery of East Jerusalem

Even though the British press highlighted Saudi Arabia’s insistence on the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab lands as a price for changing its oil policy, according to many British journalists, the recovery of the city of Jerusalem was portrayed as also occupying an important position in the Saudi Arabian’s mind. On this issue, David Hirst of *The Guardian* wrote that Saudi Arabia had insisted on the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied lands, “... including Jerusalem...”.¹⁴⁴ However, Paul Martin of *The Times* proposed that one of the main problems of Sadat and Assad, the Presidents of Egypt and Syria respectively, after the cease-fire agreement, was to satisfy King Faisal of Saudi Arabia on the issue of Jerusalem. According to Martin, although the Saudi Arabian’s had “... little direct

¹⁴¹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 9 November 1973. p.10.

¹⁴² Gill, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.7.

¹⁴³ U.P.I. *The Guardian*. 14 November 1973.

¹⁴⁴ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 25 October. 1973, p.1.

connection with [the] fighting ... the question of Jerusalem [was] one close to King Faisal's heart."¹⁴⁵ Thus, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* concluded, based on unidentified reports from Riyadh, that, "The monarch's attitude on the need to re-establish Arab control of East Jerusalem ... was especially strong."¹⁴⁶ In the same vein, Peter Gill of the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out that King Faisal was ... understood to have made it plain ... that he [would] settle for nothing less than the return of all occupied territories including East Jerusalem."¹⁴⁷

While some journalists portrayed Saudi Arabia as demanding the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab lands, with withdrawal from Jerusalem as a part of the deal, other journalists stressed the special importance of Jerusalem for Saudi Arabia, on ideological grounds. This led to a new emphasis on seeing Saudi Arabia as an Islamic, religious state. John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* described King Faisal as the "...Guardian of the holy shrines of Islam..." which of course, consists of Mecca and Medina, but he reminded his readers that "...the third holiest [was] in Jerusalem."¹⁴⁸ Further, Bulloch argued that for the sake of Jerusalem, the King would not only use his oil as a weapon, but he was also "... prepared to enter into formal diplomatic relations with Russia..."¹⁴⁹ the country which Saudi Arabia detested as "...atheistic..."¹⁵⁰

Paul Martin of *The Times* reported, based on what he called a right wing Arab newspaper *Al Hayat*, that King Faisal had said that, "... the Arab

¹⁴⁵ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 25 October 1973. p.12

¹⁴⁶ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 10 November 1973. p.14.

¹⁴⁷ Gill, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 November 1973. p.18.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.18.

East of Jerusalem should be returned to Arabs because its future is fundamental to Islam.” Thus, Martin claimed that unlike other leaders, “... who would be ready to consider an international city, or an accommodation providing for Arab sovereignty over Islamic holy places...”, King Faisal was “ ...understood to have adopted an uncompromising line...” over the question of the city.¹⁵¹

In the same vein, Patrick Kratley of *The Guardian* explained that the issue of the city of Jerusalem was a danger to any peace settlement because “... it is one of those emotional issues that does not really yield to logic.” He argued that the Saudi Arabians, as “... the Guardians of the holy places ...”, see themselves as having “... a stake in the future of Jerusalem because they regard the city as the second most holy city in Islam.” Thus, even a 'conservative' leader like King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, according to Kratley, “... would line up with militant left wingers of the Arab world...”¹⁵² on the dispute over Jerusalem.

The importance of the status of Jerusalem to the Saudi Arabian leaders and their people derives, of course, from the position which it has in the history and culture of Islam. There is a special chapter in the holy book of all Muslims, the holy Qur'an, which allocates a specific reference to the significance of the city of Jerusalem in 'Sura' XVII, named Bani Israel or 'the children of Israel'. The journey of the holy prophet is described as he was transported from the sacred mosque (of Mecca) to the furthest mosque (of Jerusalem) in the night and shown some of the signs of God. The introduction to this reads as follows:

¹⁵¹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

¹⁵² Kratley, Patrick. *The Guardian*. 13 November 1973. p.4.

Glory to (God)
 Who did take His servant
 For journey by night
 From the sacred mosque
 To the farthest mosque.¹⁵³

c) **Recognition of Palestinian Rights**

In addition to presenting Saudi Arabia as linking the removal of the oil embargo and the severe cutback in production to the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territory, especially Jerusalem, a few journalists also presented Saudi Arabia as employing its oil weapon to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. After the acceptance of the cease-fire, David Hirst of *The Guardian* wrote that the Saudi Arabians were still insisting, among other things, on the "... restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."¹⁵⁴ Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* claimed that the settlement which the Saudi Arabians were looking for as a condition to remove the 'threat' of their "oil weapon" "...[did] not only mean Israel's withdrawal from Arab territory occupied in the 1967 war ... but also the establishment of what the monarch regard[ed] as the legitimate right of the Palestinians."¹⁵⁵ Along the same lines, Paul Martin of *The Times* claimed that King Faisal, "... ha[d] tied himself to the Egyptian war aim..." which consisted, among other aims, of "... the restoration of legitimate Palestinian rights." According to Martin, King Faisal "... regarded any solution that passed over the Palestinian issue as doomed to failure." Therefore, the King was reported to have "... insisted on the importance of the Palestinians being part

153 Yusuf. Ali, A. tr. and ed. *The Holy Qur'an*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Qur'an Al-Kreem. 1984. p.403.

154 Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 25 October. 1973, p.1.

155 Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 10 November 1973. p.14.

of any peace talk and later of any agreement reached to end the Middle East crisis.”¹⁵⁶

2.1.6 SAUDI ARABIA AS AN ANTI-COMMUNIST STATE

Saudi Arabia was consistently presented as an anti-communist state . The journalists in the four different papers each referred to the anti-communist features of Saudi Arabia from different perspectives. Eric Silver, of *The Guardian*, projected this character of Saudi Arabia by arguing that Saudi Arabia was more concerned with the danger of the communists than with the danger of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To support his argument, Silver quoted an unidentified Israeli official who insisted that prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia was “... more anxious about Soviet penetration of the Middle East...” than about Israel and was more worried about the threat from “...Egypt and other ‘revolutionary’ Arab regimes...”¹⁵⁷ than even about that from Israel.

In order to strengthen his point, Silver quoted in his article Harold Wilson's personal account of the Labour government which claimed that King Faisal was “...begging the British...” not to remove their forces from the Gulf Emirate and Aden “... for fear of leaving him exposed”¹⁵⁸ to the communist threat. On the other hand, when Saudi Arabia, the West's ally in the region, lined up with other Arab countries against Israel, these countries included some which Saudi Arabia considered as “...almost communist...”. The *Daily Telegraph* journalist, John Bulloch, explained this ‘strange’ position of Saudi Arabia by writing that the Saudi Arabians had “... been

¹⁵⁶ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

¹⁵⁷ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

forced to make a common cause with such states...”, because Saudi Arabia not only distrusts the Egyptian form of socialism ... but also detests communism...”¹⁵⁹, and considers its “... creed ... as atheistic.”¹⁶⁰

The presentation of Saudi Arabia as an anti-communist state was underlined in some of the British press through descriptions of the Saudi Arabian government as ‘anxious’, ‘threatened’, ‘distrustful’, ‘detesting communists’ and ‘begging others’ not to leave it exposed to the communist threat. Besides the portrayal of Saudi Arabia as anti-communist on the grounds of emotional expressions, David Hirst of *The Guardian* projected the anti-communist role in the form of more active politics. He argued that the “...Sadat-Faisal axis and the implicit anti-communism that goes with it...” was the moving factor which led to the rift between Moscow and Syria, the main pro-USSR country among the Arab countries. Thus, Hirst concluded that, “If Assad does fall foul of the Russians, that will please Faisal.”¹⁶¹

David Hirst only put King Faisal in a position equal to Sadat in his reference to the anti-communist ‘axis’ between the two leaders. Paul Martin of *The Times*, however, stressed far more Saudi Arabia’s anti-communist stance. According to Martin, Saudi Arabia was seen as “... the arch-traditionalist in the Arab world...” and was the “... only big Arab country without relations with the Eastern block.” Also, it was the only important Islamic country that had “... declared communism an enemy of Islam.” Finally, combining references to Saudi Arabia's growing importance with its anti-communist attitude, Martin told his readers that Saudi Arabia “... was

¹⁵⁹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 November 1973. p.6.

¹⁶⁰ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.18.

¹⁶¹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 28 September 1973. p.2.

understood to have been the main driving force behind President Saddat's decision to expel the 10,000 Russian military advisers from Egypt."¹⁶²

Even during the October War, when Saudi-American relations were at their lowest since the creation of Saudi Arabia as a result of the position of the USA towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi Arabia was shown as not changing its attitude towards communists. Paul Martin of *The Times* affirmed that the Saudi Arabian leader, King Faisal, had assured the Americans that he "... reiterate[d] his opposition to the spread of communist influence and [had] state[d] that basically his policy remain[ed] unchanged."¹⁶³

Another way of projecting Saudi Arabia as anti-communist in the British Press was by emphasising the economic means used by Saudi Arabia to discourage some Arab countries from adopting a socialist policy. For example, Paul Martin of *The Times* wrote that the decrease of the socialist economic policies of Egypt, and the increase of the open door ones, which developed in the early 1970s, was induced by "... grants of financial aid from Saudi Arabia ... [and other Gulf states which] ha[d] encouraged the Egyptians to trim their socialist policies."¹⁶⁴ Moreover, besides encouraging Egypt away from socialist policies and influences, Saudi Arabia was understood to have lessened the effect of other rich Arab socialist governments, such as Libya, by making their financial contributions to other Arab countries ineffective due to King Faisal's "... promise to make good Libya's contribution at the very least."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 9 November 1973. p.10.

¹⁶³ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

¹⁶⁴ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 24 September 1973. p. VIII.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

According to John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph*, prior to the October war, Saudi Arabia had agreed to provide President Sadat with "... the money which Gadaffi was increasingly reluctant to give."¹⁶⁶ Eric Silver of *The Guardian*, who held the same view, suggested that "... Libya ha[d] been losing its allure as a source of funds and sustenance..." because the Egyptians "... were turning to ... King Faisal of Saudi Arabia."¹⁶⁷ Further, as part of Saudi Arabia's effort to contain pro-USSR Arab regimes, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* speculated that the large arms deal between Syria, the UK and France, in September 1973, which included a supply of artillery, tanks and planes, would be financed mainly by Saudi Arabia.¹⁶⁸

2.1.7 THE IMAGE OF KING FAISAL:

a) As a 'Conservative Leader'

A "... conservative leader..."¹⁶⁹ was one of the common images of King Faisal in the British press. So when President Sadat found an ally in King Faisal instead of Gadaffi, in the early 1970s, Eric Silver of *The Guardian* commented that the Egyptian leader was turning to "... the ultimate traditionalist monarch, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia ...[instead of Gadaffi]... for funds and sustenance."¹⁷⁰ Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times* viewed King Faisal as "... the most conservative ruler in the Arab world...", yet Martin quoted David Holden, who wrote that King Faisal displayed "... the characteristic knack of the radical conservative for leading

¹⁶⁶ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 October 1973. p.18.

¹⁶⁷ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 20 September 1973. p.3.

¹⁶⁸ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 25 September 1973. p.8.

¹⁶⁹ Kratley, Patrick. *The Guardian*. 13 November 1973. p.4.

¹⁷⁰ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 20 October 1973. p.3.

his people backwards into the future.”¹⁷¹ Louis Heren of *The Times* contrasted King Faisal's conservative stance with the “... radicalism...” of other Arab leaders. Compared to “... the extreme radicalism of Libya's President Gadaffi...”, King Faisal was seen as “... a moderate counterbalance...”¹⁷², “... the most moderate...[against]... the volatile and unpredictable Libyan leader.”¹⁷³ The *Daily Telegraph's* journalist, John Bulloch, fleshed out the conservative image of King Faisal when he referred to the fact that King Faisal was “... a Wahabi Moslem, one of the strictest branches of Islam.”¹⁷⁴

b) As the ‘Guardian of Islam’

Another image of the Saudi Arabian leader which was portrayed in the British press was that of the ‘Guardian of Islam’. Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times* referred to King Faisal as the “... The Guardian of the holy shrine at Mecca...”,¹⁷⁵ the city which brings thousands of Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. In the same vein, Patrick Kratley of *The Guardian* claimed that the reason why the Saudi Arabians thought they had a stake in the future of Jerusalem, which they regard as the second most holy place, was because they see themselves as “... the Guardians of the holiest place of Islam, Mecca.”¹⁷⁶ John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* also presented King Faisal as the ‘Guardian of Islam’ but pointed out that he was the unelected, “... self-appointed Guardian of the holy shrines...” of Islam.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

¹⁷² Heren, Louis. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.16.

¹⁷³ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.17.

¹⁷⁴ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 November 1973. p.18.

¹⁷⁵ Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

¹⁷⁶ Kratley, Patrick. *The Guardian*. 13 November 1973. p.18.

¹⁷⁷ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 November 1973. p.18.

King Faisal was portrayed by *The Times* as being the defender of Islamic places because the King, as the paper stated, was "... second to none in his determination to defend in particular the holy places of Islam, including Jerusalem."¹⁷⁸ In addition, Paul Martin of *The Times* presented King Faisal as the spokesman of Islam because it was "... King Faisal himself [who] declared communism an enemy of Islam."¹⁷⁹

c) **As 'America's Best Friend'**

The general trend was for most journalists to see King Faisal as a pro-USA ruler, a friend of America, or "... the man upon whom the United States [would] depend ...",¹⁸⁰ but they gave different reasons for his stance. Eric Silver of *The Guardian*, for example, thought that Saudi Arabia's developmental needs accounted for King Faisal's pro-USA attitude. As Silver argued, the Saudi Arabian King's "... long-term dream, ... to transform Saudi Arabia from an oil reservoir into an industrialised state ...", depended on the USA. In order to support his argument, Silver quoted a *Wall Street Journal's* statement which said that King Faisal's 'dream' needed "co-operation from America."¹⁸¹

Indeed, when King Faisal threatened to use the 'oil weapon' against the USA, Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* questioned the Saudi Arabian leader's threat because the King was "... America's best friend in the Arab world."¹⁸² In the same vein, *The Times* wrote that it did not expect the King to use the 'oil weapon' on the assumption that the King was "... extremely

¹⁷⁸ Staff. *The Times*. 16 October 1973. p.10.

¹⁷⁹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 9 November 1973. p.10.

¹⁸⁰ Staff. *The Times*. 10 October 1973. p.1.

¹⁸¹ Silver, Eric. *The Guardian*. 5 October 1973. p.5.

¹⁸² Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 15 October 1973. p.17.

reluctant to damage his friendly relations with the United States...”,¹⁸³ the country which Faisal depended on to develop his Kingdom.

David Hirst of *The Guardian* believed that security was also behind King Faisal’s pro-USA stance, since King Faisal felt that, “...his long term security lie in a close identification with the USA”¹⁸⁴ Yet, the picture of King Faisal as America's best friend, of someone whom Washington could simply take for granted, changed and the King was now projected as an unhappy or complaining friend after he used oil as a weapon against the USA. On 22 October 1973, *The Guardian* wrote that the Saudi Arabians, who were expected to save the Americans in an energy crisis by increasing their future oil production, might “... refuse to do so unless the United States contributed to a just settlement of the Arab - Israeli conflict.”¹⁸⁵ Peter Hillmore of *The Times* reported that the Saudi Arabians insisted that the oil weapon would “... continue to be used until the United Nations Security Council’s cease-fire resolution had been implemented.”¹⁸⁶ Likewise, Ihsan Hijazi of *The Financial Times* affirmed, based on the weekly Lebanese periodical *Al-Diyar*, that King Faisal “... would continue the suspension of oil exports to the U.S., and cut back until the cease-fire ... was firmly established and Israel withdrew.” Hijazi added that the King intended to stop oil to any “... country which adopted a hostile stand towards the Arab main cause...” and that there “... could be no tolerance or forgiveness in this matter.”¹⁸⁷ Further, when Iraq withdrew its support of Syria after the cease-fire agreement, Saudi Arabian forces remained in Syria. David Hirst of *The Guardian* claimed that even though the presence of Saudi Arabian

183 Staff. *The Times*. 16 October 1973. p.10.

184 Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 16 October 1973. p.2.

185 Unidentified. *The Guardian*. 23 October 1973. Back page.

186 Hillmore, Peter and Vielroye, Roger. *The Times*. 27 October 1973. p.19.

187 Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 29 October 1973. p.7.

troops was "... less important in itself...", it was "... evidence that King Faisal was still behind the strategy..." mapped out before the war. Hirst proposed that the strategy's main aim was "... to persist in the use of the oil weapon which is now the Arabs' strongest card."¹⁸⁸ When, during the cease-fire negotiations, Saudi Arabia further cut back its oil, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* wrote, based on unidentified sources, that King Faisal was convinced that, "... the oil weapon should be exercised even more strongly during the current diplomatic activity and settlement... [so that] ... the efforts may not lose their momentum and so the pressure on Washington may not ease."¹⁸⁹ Hijazi explained that the "... Saudi escalation arising from the cut back ... was aimed at providing Egypt with additional support..." in the political process following the cease-fire agreement.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, when Kissinger decided to visit Saudi Arabia as part of his attempt to "... keep President Nixon's entire foreign policy on track...", and when Saudi Arabia increased its oil production cut back, Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* suggested that the Saudi Arabian decision was "... a tougher attitude by Saudi Arabia [which came] only a few days before Dr Kissinger's visit."¹⁹¹ It was reported that he would pay "... high priority in his talks with Arabs, and particularly King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, to try to persuade them to drop their oil production cut back."¹⁹² Thus, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* concluded, in an article entitled 'Kissinger on mission to placate Faisal', that Kissinger's visit to Saudi Arabia was regarded as "... a move by the Nixon administration to reassure King Faisal of Washington's

¹⁸⁸ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 31 October 1973. p.2.

¹⁸⁹ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 1 November 1973. p.8.

¹⁹⁰ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 1 November 1973. p.8.

¹⁹¹ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 6 November 1973. p.1.

¹⁹² Barber, Stephen. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 November 1973. p.36.

intentions in the Middle East and to head off a further escalation by Saudi Arabia of its oil pressure on the U.S.”¹⁹³

On 4th November, 1973, the Arab oil producing countries held their second meeting in Kuwait to review the process and development of using their oil weapon. According to Paul Martin of *The Times*, it was at Saudi Arabia’s insistence that Arab oil countries held this second meeting where they decided to further increase their oil production cut back from 5 per cent to a minimum of 25 per cent. As a result of the new measure, Saudi Arabia’s oil production was reported to “... fall to 5.8 million barrels per day...”¹⁹⁴ compared with 9 million barrels per day in previous months.

The coverage of the second Arab oil ministers’ meeting represented Saudi Arabia as putting further political pressure on the USA and Western European countries to press Israel to accept the Arab countries’ definition of peace. In fact, one day before the meeting, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia held a “...secret talk...”¹⁹⁵ to co-ordinate their political manoeuvre after the cease-fire agreement. Paul Martin of *The Times* underlined that the two countries and Saudi Arabia had “... agreed on a joint political stand on peace efforts.” In the same way, David Housego of the *Financial Times* argued that the second oil meeting was seen as a direct response “... to the USA’s apparent refusal to put pressure on Israel.”¹⁹⁶

The fact that the Saudi Arabians had adopted an aggressive attitude in applying the ‘oil weapon’ as a political weapon, was clear in the *Daily*

193 Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 1 November 1973. p.8.

194 Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 6 November 1973. p.1.

195 Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 3 November 1973. p.1.

196 Housego, David. *Financial Times*. 6 November 1973. p.8.

Telegraph's report that the Saudi Arabians had "... asked the conference for approval of 50 per cent..."¹⁹⁷ instead of the agreed 25 per cent, and had even "... spurred the others into developing the machinery to ensure that the oil weapon hits the right targets and hurts when it does."¹⁹⁸ David Hirst of *The Guardian* concluded that "In the intense pressure that the Arabs [were] exerting on America, it [was] America's friend, King Faisal [who was] the lead wolf wielding the stick in the shape of the oil weapon."¹⁹⁹ Thus, Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times* wrote that, "The piquancy... of the matter was that the process of using the oil weapon was led by ... the one man who, because of the value he placed on his relationship with America.... would be considered the last to support such [a] use."²⁰⁰ However, in spite of the King's use of the oil weapon, and even his threat to enter into political relations with the USSR, King Faisal was "... certain that the future of his country ... should be bound up with America and the West."²⁰¹

d) As 'A New Leader'

The presentation of King Faisal and his country as emerging into a position of leadership and power in the Arab world after the crushing military defeats suffered by Egypt and Syria, was clearly signalled by a feature article by Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times* entitled 'Man of the Week', on 20 October, 1973. Martin wrote an exclusive article about the Saudi Arabian King, presenting him as emerging as the leader of the Arab cause. Martin held that King Faisal, "... after years in the shadows...", had

¹⁹⁷ Reuter, *Daily Telegraph*. 9 November 1973. p.36.

¹⁹⁸ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

¹⁹⁹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 9th November 1973, p.2.

²⁰⁰ Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

²⁰¹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.18.

emerged in the Arab world "... as one of its undoubted leaders."²⁰² He continued by saying that, "The two decisions in Kuwait ... have thrust Faisal irrevocably onto the world stage." Martin wrote that compared to other Arab leaders, Faisal

"... hardly fitt[ed] the popular image of an oil-rich Arab ruler. Ascetic where many of his compatriots ha[d] been vulgarly ostentatious, diffident and elliptical in his public pronouncements where they ha[d] been outspoken, he [was] nevertheless typical of a new and still small breed of Arab monarchs."²⁰³

King Faisal and his country, in their unwanted new role, were an unknown quantity because "... neither Saudi Arabia nor Faisal himself ha[d] ever sought publicity."²⁰⁴ It was difficult for journalists to get in and out of the country and harder still, though by no means entirely impossible, to gain an audience with the king. In addition to presenting King Faisal and Saudi Arabia as a secretive society, Martin gave his readers the impression that Saudi Arabia was a backward country. Referring to King Faisal's "...main task...", Martin said the King "... ha[d] been seen on the one hand to use his new oil wealth for the purposes of developing a backward and still inherently tribal kingdom and, on the other, to preserve the traditional values of the Muslim way of life."²⁰⁵

Similarly, John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* believed that it was not bad news since, "... King Faisal [was] a man of rooted convictions and massive obstinacy, allied to a shrewd appraisal of what was beneficial for his

²⁰² Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

²⁰³ Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

²⁰⁴ Ibid..

²⁰⁵ Ibid..

own country.”²⁰⁶ Thus, Bulloch argued that “.. it [was] becoming increasingly obvious that it [was] the brooding, hawk-like figure of King Faisal who [was] emerging as the real power.”²⁰⁷

Likewise, Louis Heren of *The Times* stated that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia had become a major influence in the Middle East. He claimed that the monarch's influence was based on the “... country's oil reserves and swelling coffers.”²⁰⁸ In the context of using oil as a weapon in the October War, Paul Martin, also of *The Times*, believed that what had made the oil producer's decision very serious to the consumer countries was that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the “ ... leader of the moderate camp, ha[d] set the pace in continuing the oil war.”²⁰⁹

Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times*, argued that King Faisal was “...[the] most conservative ruler in the Arab world...”, and suggested that oil was what had thrust Faisal and his country irrevocably on the world stage ... after years in the shadows as one of its undoubted leaders”.²¹⁰ John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* concluded that “... what gave King Faisal a working majority in the Arab league, as well as a commanding voice in Arab affairs ... was that King Hussein of Jordan, King Hassan of Morocco and the Gulf rulers all looked to him for leadership.”²¹¹

The most important outcome of the ‘Oil Crisis’ from the point of view of the image of Saudi Arabia in British eyes, or at least in the eyes of

²⁰⁶ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.18.

²⁰⁷ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1973. p.18.

²⁰⁸ Heren, Louis and Ashford, Nicholas. *The Times*. 8 October 1973. p.16.

²⁰⁹ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 29 October 1973. p.19.

²¹⁰ Martin, Jurek. *Financial Times*. 20 October 1973. p.32.

²¹¹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 November 1973. p.6.

the journalists and readers of the 'quality' press, was the emergence of both the country and its King into a position of leadership within the Arab states, and the subtle but perceivable shift in the balance of the friendly relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

2.1.8 CONCLUSION

The perceived emergence of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia into an important position on the world stage and into regional leadership came as a result of the oil embargo led by Saudi Arabia during, and after, the October war. This raises the question of why Saudi Arabia was not already seen somewhat more in that light a long time before? Saudi Arabia had already participated in at least three oil embargos in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in 1948, 1956 and 1967. These attempts, however, were wholly unsuccessful due to the different circumstances which existed relating to energy resources, in general, and to oil in particular. But during the six years following the 1967 war, the international oil market witnessed a rapid expansion induced by the economic boom in most of the developed Western countries. This increased the demand for oil at a continuous and even accelerating pace until 1973. This unique growth in the demand for oil was not only due to a normal growth in demand which accompanied an expanding economy but was also the result of "... the switch to oil as the predominant source of energy supply compared to other sources such as coal."²¹²

In addition, world-wide energy conditions started to change, around 1970, when the energy market was unusually tight due to a high

²¹² Adelphi Papers. No. 117. 1975.

consumption of oil. The buyers' market that used to characterise the oil business developed into more of a sellers' market. Further, the OPEC organisation began to exercise some restraint over oil production and prices. In general, according to the IISS's 1974 report, (International Institute of Strategic Studies) the following principal factors were believed to characterise the oil situation.

(a) Demand for oil in world trade would rise from 43 million barrels a day in 1972 to some 100 million barrels a day by 1985, if demand for energy in Japan, Western Europe and North America continued to increase. These countries accounted for 80 per cent of oil trade.

(b) The USA was expected to be a major oil importer of 15 million barrels a day by 1985 and the USSR, for reasons of cost, quality and availability of oil, was also assumed to become a customer in the oil market.

(c) Five hundred and fifty billion barrels, or 62 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, lie in the Middle East and 160 billion barrels, or 29 per cent, lie in Saudi Arabia alone. Therefore, the "... reliance of the industrial West on the Middle East - and particularly on Saudi Arabia, the producer of the last resort - would increase very heavily."²¹³

Given Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, its geographical location also came to be seen as giving it a position of special and long-term strategic importance. This created a greater interest in Saudi Arabia by Western countries, in general, and the United States, in particular, which "... extend[ed] beyond .. short term consideration, as well as 'purely' economic

²¹³ Strategic Survey 1973 IISS Publication. 1974. p.31.

consideration to include the larger national security needs of the Western world, and indeed, the whole non communist world.”²¹⁴

The British press came to be conscious of the above considerations as a result of the ‘Oil Crisis’. All four papers came to project the ‘new’ importance of Saudi Arabia and implied that the Saudi Arabians were emerging into a permanent position on the world stage in the context of the energy crisis which ensued, and which the West needed to solve through Saudi Arabia. Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* believed that the Americans, who were “..counting on a steady increase in Middle East supplies to meet growing energy needs...”, had hoped that “...Saudi Arabia would increase production from 7 million barrels per day to 20 million barrels per day over the next few years.”²¹⁵

Likewise, Paul Martin of *The Times* viewed Saudi Arabia as the country “...upon which the United States [was] expected to rely to fill the gap created by the energy crisis.”²¹⁶ When Saudi Arabia escalated the use of the ‘oil weapon’ by ordering a 10 per cent cut back in its production during the October war, James Wightman of the *Daily Telegraph* described the Saudi Arabian move as “... the biggest single blow yet in the world oil crisis... [because] ... Saudi Arabia's oil fields produce more than all the other Arab states put together.”²¹⁷ *The Guardian*, which had originally suggested that the ‘oil weapon’ did not affect the USA’s policy towards the war, stated that “... the United States badly needs the Saudi Arabians, who are sitting on the largest crude oil reserves in the world, to expand their

²¹⁴ Al-Marayati, Abid, A. 1984. p.66.

²¹⁵ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 18 October 1973. p.1.

²¹⁶ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 18 October 1973. p.8.

²¹⁷ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

production substantially over the coming years to meet the American energy gap.”²¹⁸

Anthony Tucker of *The Guardian* advised the Americans to “... accelerate and keep their development of internal energy resources much more rapid than [was] done at present...” instead of pressing its demands on increasing oil production in the Middle East states, in particular Saudi Arabia.²¹⁹

When Saudi Arabia stopped its oil shipments to the USA, and Dr Kissinger, the USA Secretary of State, planned to visit Saudi Arabia, Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* argued, based on unnamed ‘informed sources’, that the visit was “... a move by the Nixon administration... to head off further escalation by Saudi Arabia of its oil pressure on the U.S.”²²⁰

In the same vein, Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* pointed out that, “...Arab Observers...” described the visit as “... evidence of the importance of Arab oil to U.S. policy makers.”²²¹ Stephen Barber of the *Daily Telegraph* stressed that the Americans were trying to persuade King Faisal of Saudi Arabia “... to drop oil production cut back...”²²², and were looking “... for a promise of an unrestricted flow of oil to the United States.”²²³ Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* claimed that Dr Kissinger had “... impressed on the Saudi Arabian monarch the vital importance the U.S. attaches to lifting the oil embargo.” Further, Hijazi added that Kissinger

²¹⁸ Unidentified, *The Guardian*. 23 October 1973. Back Page.

²¹⁹ Tucker, Anthony. *The Guardian*. 31 October 1973. p.13.

²²⁰ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 1 November 1973. p.8.

²²¹ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 2 November 1973. p.2.

²²² Barber, Stephen. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 November 1973. p.36.

²²³ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 November 1973. p.7.

even "... assured King Faisal that Washington was determined, this time, to bring about a settlement..."²²⁴, which the Saudi Arabians insisted on as a price for ending the 'oil weapon'.

Paul Martin of *The Times* amplified this by stating that King Faisal had made it clear to Dr Henry Kissinger that, "A just settlement would ensure uninterrupted flow of oil to the United States and the rest of the world."²²⁵ It would also grant "...[an] earlier tentative undertaking, to raise Saudi Arabia's pre-September production of more than eight million barrels daily by more than two and a half times by 1980 to alleviate the Americans' expected energy crisis."²²⁶

Similarly, to show the vital interests of the European countries in Saudi Arabia and its importance for them, some of the British press emphasised the increased dependency of some Western countries on Saudi Arabian oil based on the latest trade statistics which stated that Britain had imported oil, worth 89 million pounds, of which 25 million's worth came from Saudi Arabia. Peter Hillmore of *The Guardian* was alarmed that the UK had "... increased its dependence..."²²⁷ on Saudi Arabian oil supplies. When Saudi Arabia decided to stop oil shipments to Holland, which refused to modify its policy towards Israel, Peter Rogers of *The Guardian* held that the Saudi Arabian action would have "... far wider effects on the whole of Northern Europe ... [because] ... one quarter of Europe's oil supplies go through the Dutch port of Rotterdam ... the Saudi Arabian action could effect Scandinavia, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg."²²⁸ Similarly,

²²⁴ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 10 November 1973. p.14.

²²⁵ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

²²⁶ Martin, Paul. *The Times*. 10 November 1973. p.6.

²²⁷ Hillmore, Peter. *The Guardian*. 26 October 1973. p.2.

²²⁸ Rogers, Peter. *The Guardian*. 29 October 1973. p.20.

Adrian Hamilton of the *Financial Times* believed that the Saudi Arabian move was "... bound to cause severe strain on European oil supplies...", as the Saudi Arabian supply was "... one of the largest single supplies of oil to Holland which act[ed] as the central import terminal..."²²⁹ for European countries. Saudi Arabia's "...oil fields, produce[d] 8 million barrels per day."²³⁰

The broad trends in the world economy, and especially those of the Western economies, had predicated that Saudi Arabia would emerge, and would be seen to have emerged, onto the world stage as a country of importance, and that if its government played the cards effectively which circumstances have given it, it would also come to occupy a position of regional leadership sometime in the future. It was now, however, that with unexpected determination it emerged onto the world stage as a country whose views carried weight, both as a result of the fact that it emerged as well as the implications this brought with it. The unexpected renewal of the war between the Arab countries, and Israel, in 1973, certainly provided an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to strengthen its position, but it was the result of the effectiveness and skill with which King Faisal and Saudi Arabia responded to that opportunity which was the critical factor. It was the contrast between the ultimate failure of Egypt and Syria's military efforts, and the at least partial effectiveness of Saudi Arabia's use of the 'oil weapon' for backing up diplomatic pressure, that led to a sudden and considerable enhancement of Saudi Arabia's image in terms of its perceived importance, and indeed, it transformed the image of its leader into a figure

²²⁹ Hamilton, Adrian. *Financial Times*. 29 October 1973. p.1.

²³⁰ Wightman, James. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 October 1973. p.1.

of world importance, in addition to the position he already occupied in the Arab world.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MECCA CRISIS

THE 'MECCA CRISIS'

3.1 PRELUDE: 22 OCTOBER 1979-19 NOVEMBER 1979.

During the years after the October war and the oil embargo of 1973-1974, two main developments took place. One was the peace process between Egypt and Israel, sponsored by the USA, and the other one was the increase in world oil prices as a result of the oil embargo during the October war. These two changes, especially the latter, affected Saudi Arabia and created the setting for the press coverage of the Mecca crisis.

a) Saudi Arabia's Position During The Peace Process Between Egypt and Israel

The strong Arab opposition to the Egyptian-Israeli treaty which was formed around the Damascus-Baghdad axis, threatened any party, including Saudi Arabia, that would not actively penalise and ostracise Egypt. (Moreover, the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran and the war between the two Yemens in that time confronted the Saudi Arabians with additional critical dangers.) Thus, Saudi Arabia was forced to choose between two strategies: one was to support Egypt and confront Arab opposition, and the other, was to support the Arab opposition and risk her connections with Egypt and the USA. The Saudi Arabian leader came down in favour of the latter strategy. This attitude might explain Saudi Arabia's oil policy during 1979 and especially during the oil crisis of that year.

b) The Effect of World Oil Prices on Saudi Arabia's Domestic Situation

High oil prices provided Saudi Arabia with an extraordinarily high income: from 1.2 billion dollars in 1971, to 22.6 in 1973, 25.7 in 1975, 30.8 in 1976, 36.5 in 1977, 32.2 in 1978 and 60 in 1979. Such a high income allowed Saudi Arabia to start major development plans, most notably, the second five-year plan of 1976-1980, in which she spent 142 billion dollars. However, development for Saudi Arabia meant and required imported foreign technology and foreign technicians, teachers, doctors, workers and advisers with their own values and culture which were different from that of the Saudi Arabians. This strain and conflict characterised Saudi Arabia's domestic life which came to a head in the 1979 Mecca crisis when an extremist group attacked and seized the Grand Mosque. Thus, as Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* wrote, "In the wake of the first oil price explosion, from 1974 to 1976 especially, the Kingdom suffered similar stresses and strains as Iran. The Saudi Arabian government saw the warning light and put the brakes on to control development and inflation."²³¹

3.2 SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL POLICY

The four weeks' sample period before the 'Mecca crisis' covered the period from mid October to mid November, 1979. An examination of the British newspapers during this period showed that the image of Saudi Arabia revolved around the oil issues. Once again, it was oil issues, this time resulting from the fall of Iranian oil production in early 1979 caused by the Islamic revolution, which brought Saudi Arabia to the attention of the British

²³¹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

papers. The four weeks which were studied did not cover the whole of the Oil Crisis but covered the concluding period of the second Oil Crisis, which was dominated by two central issues. The first issue was connected to doubts about the likelihood of Saudi Arabia's high production policy continuing. The second issue arose from Saudi Arabia's decision to continue its high oil production level, but with a higher price.

The two related issues led to views of Saudi Arabia's oil policy which were different from the images that had appeared during the first Oil Crisis, namely because the second Oil Crisis took place in a different political setting. The Saudi Arabian role during the second Oil Crisis was not directly related to the Arab - Israeli conflict. Also, unlike the first case, Saudi Arabia's actions, which adversely affected Britain and the West, were taken against the desires of Saudi Arabia, which in general sought to ease rather than tighten the oil position world-wide.

In sum, during the four weeks before the Mecca crisis, oil was the focal point around which the image of Saudi Arabia revolved. Saudi Arabia's oil production policy was believed to have been influenced by a lack of technological resources, division 'within' the royal family, oil conservation aims and Arab pressure. On the other hand, seeking to protect the world economy, trying to rationalise the oil price structure and restoring the solidarity of OPEC were projected as the main reasons behind Saudi Arabia's oil price policy. Due to the continuity of these issues and policies, and their perception as such by the press even after the attack on the Grand Mosque, the two periods, namely before and after the Mecca crisis, will be treated as one section as far as oil is concerned.

3.3 SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL PRODUCTION POLICY

By the beginning of the first quarter of 1979, Saudi Arabia's oil production started to decline from 10 million barrels per day, to about 9.8 and finally to 8.8 in the early second quarter of that year. This reduction in Saudi Arabia's oil production and the collapse of Iranian oil exports, as a result of the Iranian Islamic revolution of early 1979, played an important role in creating a tight oil supply which was responsible for the creation of the second Oil Crisis, or the 1979 'oil shock'.

In an article which caught both the public and official mood in the USA concerning the seriousness and the effect of the 1979 Oil Crisis, Andreas Whittam Smith of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that, "So unpleasant would further reduction in oil supplies be for the consuming nations that war like spirits are foolishly urging military intervention. In California you can see bumper stickers reading: 'We need oil, not scapegoats. Let's go for it'."²³² He went on to write how, "In June, a television sponsored poll asked the question: Would you favour the use of force to take oil if our heating oil supplies are inadequate next winter? The proportion of respondents saying "yes" was 62 per cent". He referred to how American admirals had explained how simple it would be to invade key Middle East countries. He also pointed out that, "Most major American corporations have done a war scenario as part of their long-term planning. One company chairman called this exercise, 'The hidden agenda'." With reference to Saudi Arabia, Andreas stated that, "James Atkins, one time United States Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said that in such an adventure, America would have to consider the expulsion of the native population from the areas taken over and

²³² Whittam Smith, Andreas. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 November 1979. p.18.

the drafting of American workers to man the entire oil fields. Even then, sabotage would probably have caused terrible damage.”²³³

When in October, 1979, Crown Prince Fahd (later King Fahd) informed the American Ambassador that in response to American requests, Saudi Arabian oil production would be increased, it was stressed that the extra one million barrels a day were authorised only in order to alleviate the strain on the world’s oil supply market.

By the beginning of the final quarter of 1979, the British press were emphasising the change in the Saudi Arabian oil policy. Compared to the more moderate oil policy which had prevailed during most of 1979, Saudi Arabia was now presented as being keener on following a policy which aimed at less oil production and a higher oil price. British journalists also believed that whereas Saudi Arabia was prepared “...[to] show herself willing to increase output for a short period above her desired level in order to accommodate the need of the consumers...”²³⁴ that “... level would not be renewed for the next quarter.”²³⁵ They saw technical inability, division within the royal family, oil conservation aims and Arab pressure as the reasons for doubting the continuation of a high output. These led to discussions in the British press of aspects of Saudi Arabia which had not before formed a part of the evolving image of Saudi Arabia in ‘quality’ British newspapers.

²³³ Whittam Smith, Andreas. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 November 1979. p.18.

²³⁴ Whittam Smith, Andreas. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 November 1979. p.18.

²³⁵ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 13 November 1979. p.22.

a) **Technical Inability**

The Guardian viewed Saudi Arabia, in particular, as losing its pivotal position in the oil market as a result of its technical inability. John Andrews of *The Guardian* wrote that,

“... the underlying problem for the consumers is the demise of Saudi Arabia as the dictating force in OPEC. Until the shortfall caused by the Iranian revolution, Saudi Arabia could always keep prices in line by threatening to flood the market with extra oil ... [however] with Iran now limiting its exports to 3.3 million barrels per day, this no longer holds true. Saudi Arabia's extra million barrels per day in the second half of this year has failed to ease the market and there are, in any case, severe doubts about Saudi Arabia's technical ability to produce indefinitely above the 8.5 million barrel mark.”²³⁶

Along the same lines, Frances Cairncross of *The Guardian* believed that Saudi Arabia was the country which “... could once be relied upon by the West to stop OPEC from rocking the economic boat. But it is no longer clear if it can control what happens to world oil prices.”²³⁷ Hamish Mcrae wrote that, “The ability of the Saudi Arabians to boost production much above the present 9.5 million barrels per day is technically quite limited.”²³⁸ Thus, the result of the Iranian oil cut back, “... has been to rob Saudi Arabia of its dominating position within OPEC by removing its ability to produce an instant supply glut through additional production.”²³⁹

²³⁶ Andrews, John *The Guardian*, 27 October 1979, p.18.

²³⁷ Cairncross, Frances *The Guardian*, 9 November 1979, p.17.

²³⁸ Mcrae, Hamish *The Guardian*, 8 November 1979, p.17.

²³⁹ Andrews, John *The Guardian*, 13 November 1979, p.22.

b) **'Division' Within the Royal Family**

On 23 October, 1979, the British press highlighted two reports made by two Saudi Arabian senior ministers. One was by the Oil minister, Sheikh Yamani who was reported as saying at a news conference in Atlanta that, "A young Turk Mafia in the Saudi government was pushing for higher oil prices and a substantial reduction in oil production levels."²⁴⁰ The other report was made by the Saudi Arabian Information Minister, Dr. Mohammed Abdu Yamani, as a denial to the former report in which he was reported to have said that, "Reports of the Oil Minister's statements were a complete fabrication in whole and, in part, they were sensationalist and aimed at spreading confusion."²⁴¹ Roland Gribben of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that, "Divisions inside Saudi Arabia are coming increasingly into the open... Sheikh Yamani, Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister, said a 'young Turk Mafia' was pressing for policy changes." Gribben assumed that it was "... no secret that there were splits inside the Saudi ruling family on crucial oil issues..." and highlighted Sheikh Yamani's statement that, "Saudi's moderating role was being reduced."²⁴² Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* asked the following question in an article entitled 'Saudi Arabian oil policy presenting a solid front to the world', "In the face of the kingdom's traditional and impassive facade of total unity, is the leadership of the world's biggest exporter of oil divided over the crucial issue of pricing, and more important, production of its major resource?"²⁴³ He stressed that,

²⁴⁰ Reuter. *The Guardian*. 23 October 1979. p.9. See also Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 October 1979. p.36. Gribben, Roland *Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 1979, p.36.

²⁴¹ Reuter. *The Guardian*. 23 October 1979. p.9. See also Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 October 1979. p.36. Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 23 October 1979. p.36.

²⁴² Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 23 October 1979. p.36.

²⁴³ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 October 1979. p.3.

“The evidence is, however, that Sheikh Yamani did refer to the existence of a 'young Turk Mafia' in Saudi Arabia which ... evoked an image of ridicule in direct contrast to the solemn conservatism of what was - at least until the emergence of the Ayatollah Khomeini as the supreme power in Iran - the world's only theocratic state”.²⁴⁴

On the other hand, *The Guardian* simply reported that,

“The Saudi Arabian Government has denied as total fabrication statements attributed to the Saudi Oil Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, on divisions within the Saudi Government over oil pricing and production.”²⁴⁵

Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* went beyond the surface of the argument as to what Sheikh Yamani might, or might not, have said and discussed the Oil Minister's statement and Saudi Arabia's decision making process. Johns explained that,

“Even though in the Saudi system, the advice of Sheikh Yamani and other commoners in the cabinet is, to varying degrees, taken into account on the most important questions in practice, it would be misleading to talk of 'young Turks' in the leadership, with one possible exception. In the last analysis, important political decisions on production and pricing are made by a small group of princes of the royal family, outside The Council of Ministers and in an obscure, archaic manner. Apart from King Khalid and crown Prince Fahad, its most prominent members are known to be Prince Sultan, Minister of Defence; Prince Abdullah, Commander of the National Guard; and Prince Naif, Minister of the Interior.

On grounds of age and attitude, the only man who might justifiably be called a 'young Turk', and has been, is Prince Saud al-Feisal , the Foreign Minister.”²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Reuter *The Guardian*. 23 October 1979. p.9.

²⁴⁶ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 October 1979. p.3.

c) **Oil Conservation**

Reflecting on Saudi Arabia's oil production, Ray Dafter of the *Financial Times* wrote that,

“Saudi Arabia, which is still producing at a rate of 9.5 million barrels per day in order to stabilise world supplies... would like to reduce its output to what it regards as a more acceptable level of 8.5 million barrels per day. It may do [so], if it sees little progress being achieved, in the area of energy conservation.”²⁴⁷

Commenting on Saudi Arabia's high oil production, *The Times* wrote that, “It is doubtful how long Saudis can afford to go on irritating its OPEC partners while the West shows little real sign of reducing consumption”.²⁴⁸ Thus, when the USA's Treasury Secretary, Mr G. William Miller visited Saudi Arabia to ask Saudi Arabia to continue higher oil production level “... in return for a concrete effort by consuming countries to reduce consumption”²⁴⁹, John Andrews of *The Guardian* wrote that, “... hopes that Saudi Arabia [was] planning a spectacular leap in oil production to dampen down the market and reassert the Saudi's pivotal role in OPEC, were firmly quashed.”²⁵⁰ He stated that Sheikh Yamani had “... dismissed such plans...” and had said in Los Angeles, “I do not think the question is one of increasing supply.”²⁵¹ Also, in Brussels, Yamani warned of the dangers of an over reliance on oil. He stressed that such a reliance, “... could undermine the entire supply system if adequate countervailing methods were not applied.”²⁵² Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* reported that other

²⁴⁷ Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 14 November 1979. p.20.

²⁴⁸ Staff. *The Times*. 3 December 1979. p.17.

²⁴⁹ Staff. *The Times*. 24 November 1979. p.19.

²⁵⁰ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 27 October 1979. p.18.

²⁵¹ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 27 October 1979. p.18.

²⁵² Ibid.

senior government members, such as Sheikh Hisham Nazer, Minister of Planning,

“... have said publicly in the past that they would prefer to ... prevent the exhaustion of the country's one great but finite resource and limit oil output to what the kingdom needs to provide finance. Others like Mr Ghazi Al-Ghossibi, Minister of Industry and Electricity, and Mr Mohammed Abu Al-Khali, Minister of Economy and Finance, are believed to be of the same opinion.”²⁵³

In an article entitled 'Cut In Oil Output Need Not Be Unkindest Of All', Andreas Whittam Smith of the *Daily Telegraph* stated that,

“It does not require much imagination to see why OPEC is attracted by the ideas. Indeed, it should be particularly easy for us. Britain is also an oil producer. The government has recently announced conservation measures that have the effect of reducing North Sea output below what it would otherwise have been... The key fact is this, since 1979 less oil has been found in the world than has been consumed. Before that watershed year, the ratio between world output and reserves was constantly improving, now the gap line is relentlessly downward.”²⁵⁴

d) Arab Pressure

It was 'assumed' that major demands were made on Saudi Arabia as an oil-power by other Arab states. With regard to this issue, Ray Dafter of the *Financial Times* wrote that,

“Saudi Arabia ... is still producing at a rate of 9.5

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Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 November 1979. p.3.

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Whittam Smith, Andreas. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 November 1979. p.18.

million barrels per day in order to stabilise world oil supplies. It would like to reduce its output to what it regards as a more acceptable level of 8.5 million barrels per day. It may do if it sees little progress being achieved in the area of ... Palestinian self determination.”²⁵⁵

Nicholas Hirst of *The Times* assumed that Saudi Arabia was under pressure at home because “... some other Arab nations [saw] it as being too friendly to the USA while the Camp David Accord left the Palestine question unresolved.”²⁵⁶ Likewise, Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* assumed that, “The Saudi government ... was also under heavy pressure from other Arab states and the Palestine Liberation Organisation to reimpose the 8.5 barrels a days ceiling on its oil production.”²⁵⁷ *The Times* journalist, Nicholas Hirst, concluded that even though the Saudi Arabians might like to keep politics out of oil matters, they could not “... ignore the surge in Islamic feeling throughout the Middle East and the failure of the Camp David Accord to make any real progress towards solving the Palestinian question. All these have their effect on pricing and supply policies.”²⁵⁸ Indeed, during the 10th Arab League summit held in Tunis in November, 1979, some Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, were just able to block a call in the summit by the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, who “... called on Arabs to use their oil resources in the battle against Israel.”²⁵⁹

While Saudi Arabia had been under pressure from the Americans, who wanted “... the Saudis to continue the higher level of production to

²⁵⁵ Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 14 November 1979. p.20.

²⁵⁶ Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 27 November 1979. p.12.

²⁵⁷ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 4 December 1979. p.1.

²⁵⁸ Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 14 December 1979. p.21.

²⁵⁹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 21 November 1979. p.4. See also Reuter. *The Guardian*. 21 November 1979. p.6. See also Reuter. *The Times*. 21 November 1979. p.7. See also Matthews, Roger. *Financial Times*. 21 November 1979. p.4.

restrain prices and keep inflation in check...”,²⁶⁰ other Arabs saw the continuation of the higher Saudi Arabian oil level as “... being too friendly to the US...”,²⁶¹ who they believed had ignored the Palestinian issue. This pressure was led by the Syrian and Iraq axis who wanted to challenge “... the more moderate oil producers, like Saudi Arabia...”²⁶², to use oil as an “... effective economic weapon...”²⁶³ “...against countries which support[ed] Israel and Egypt.”²⁶⁴ Another pressure stemmed from Iran which intended to persuade all OPEC countries to cut back their production. Saudi Arabia, which had increased its oil production level in order to ease the oil supply position as a result of the revolutionary events in that country during 1978 - 1979, lowered its production to enable Iran to regain its market share. Yet Iran, who wanted to maintain its lower production level and higher oil prices, did not increase its output level.²⁶⁵ Thus, when Saudi Arabia once again increased its oil production level to ease the oil supply situation and to control prices, Iran was perceived to have exerted heavy pressure on Saudi Arabia to drop back from its extra oil production level.

Iran’s pressure on Saudi Arabia, which was presented in the British press as a factor behind the possible lowering of Saudi Arabian oil production, was originally given less emphasis compared to other factors. However, the Iranian influence on Saudi Arabia’s oil policy seemed to be highlighted more and more in the papers as other events unfolded or erupted.

²⁶⁰ Reuter. *The Times*. 26 November 1979. p.15.

²⁶¹ Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 27 November 1979. p.12.

²⁶² Matthews, Roger. *Financial Times*. 21 November 1979. p.4.

²⁶³ Reuter. *The Times*. 21 November 1979. p.7.

²⁶⁴ Matthews, Roger. *Financial Times*, 21 November 1979. p.4.

²⁶⁵ William, Quandt. 1981. p.177-179.

For example, when the Holy Grand Mosque in Mecca was seized, *The Times* ran an article by Nicholas Hirst under the title, "After the Revolt at Mecca - Even

Greater Concern Over Oil Supplies". Hirst, who maintained that the Mecca events had added a new dimension asked,

"Could the Ayatollah stir up the Shi'ite workers in the Saudi oil fields? Might Islamic fever break out in Saudi Arabia in a more extreme form and endanger either the present regime or the level of oil production."²⁶⁶

In addition to the vulnerability of Saudi Arabia's oil policy with regard to the ideological Iranian influence, the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out how the Iranians could influence Saudi Arabian attitudes indirectly through other parties. For instance, in early December, 1979, a meeting of Arab oil producing countries broke up in confusion after, Saudi Arabia's "... Oil Minister walked out in protest against a resolution in support of the Iranian students holding American hostages in Tehran"²⁶⁷, which was proposed by Syria and Libya. Sheikh Yamani's walk out angered the Iranian Oil Minister, Ali Akabar Mointar, who later rounded on Saudi Arabia's refusal to back the resolution "... supporting Iran in its dispute with the US..." He stated that it was "...astonishing, that Ahmad Zaki Yamani [could] claim that there [was] no connection between politics and economics."²⁶⁸ David Hirst of *The Guardian* reported the Saudi Arabians as saying that oil and politics could not be separated and that they were "... not going to be

²⁶⁶ Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 27 November. 1979, p.12.

²⁶⁷ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 December 1979, p.4.

²⁶⁸ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*, 6 December 1979, p.6.

stampeded into the kind of apocalyptic showdown which Colonel Gadaffi apparently want[ed] to foist upon them."²⁶⁹

While it was being argued that Iran could disturb Saudi Arabia's stability through its Shi'ite minority in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, and through its allies in the Arab region, it was also being argued that Iran could influence Saudi Arabia's oil policy through its strategic and military position. *The Guardian's* unnamed staff member in Jeddah, reflecting on the effect of the American - Iranian tension, claimed that,

"... possible repercussions on the Kingdom's oil industries should the US - Iran turmoil lead to a war, are a prime cause of anxiety. The risks include an Iranian blockade of the 30 mile - wide straits of Hormuz, and even an attack on the Kingdom's indefensible oil fields in the Eastern province. The oil fields stretch across miles of desert and their installations - wells, fractionation plants, pumps, refineries - make ready targets for external aerial attacks or for internal Islamic militants."²⁷⁰

The image of Saudi Arabia which was being presented to the British public was becoming more multifaceted, even in terms of the simplicities of an 'oil-state', with a greater understanding emerging of Saudi Arabia's vulnerability to various inside and outside pressures and the dangers arising, not only from the Arab - Israel conflict, but also from the Gulf region tensions and the combination of having an internal minority which was the majority of a powerful state effectively bordering on Saudi Arabia. Awareness of the importance of the Shi'ite minority in Saudi Arabia's strategic Eastern province, where they constituted a majority compared to other parts of Saudi Arabia, appeared for the first time and so did the

²⁶⁹ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 10 December 1979. p.6.
²⁷⁰ Staff. *The Guardian*. 11 December 1979. p.7.

realisation that given Saudi Arabia's huge size, its under-population and its close location, Saudi Arabia was very vulnerable to military options.

To sum up, the British press now came to view Saudi Arabia as a country which would like to practise a moderate oil production policy, but which was beset with considerable and complex internal and external circumstances which could dictate this policy to be less moderate. A more sophisticated and sympathetic image was coming into being.

3.4 SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL PRICE POLICY

Oil prices are related to oil supply. The Saudi Arabian oil production policy of high output levels, which was discussed earlier, was designed by the Saudi Arabians to keep oil prices down to a moderate level because normally, the smaller the oil supply, the higher the oil price. Thus, Saudi Arabia's decision to increase its oil production by one million barrels per day above its normal level, was not only to compensate the oil supply shortage caused by Iran's falling oil production, but was also to restrain oil prices, in order to prevent a world-wide economic depression spreading from the oil consuming industries of the West. This was perceived and appreciated by the British press. Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* explained that, "The leap-frogging escalation of prices since the beginning of 1979 would have been far worse without Saudi Arabia's role in maintaining oil supply stability." John's quoted John West, the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, as saying that, "A fall of 50 per cent in Saudi production would bring the greatest world-wide depression we have ever seen."²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 23 October 1979. p.3. See also UPI *The Guardian*. 26 November 1979. p.7.

Moreover Saudi Arabia, which had maintained a higher oil production above its normal level in order to ease the oil market supply was "... charging the \$18 a barrel bottom price for its oil in order to stabilise prices and the economic situation in the consumer countries."²⁷² Meanwhile, other producer countries like Iran were charging \$5.50 a barrel more than Saudi Arabia for the same quality of crude and Algeria, Libya and Nigeria broke through the official OPEC ceiling of \$23.50. Saudi Arabia was described as being "... totally isolated in OPEC... and totally out of line within the market, being the only country charging an \$18 a barrel bottom price ... set by the two tier system which emerged from the OPEC conference of 1979."²⁷³

In addition to Saudi Arabia's own moderate oil production policy, with the exception of the oil embargo of 1973 - 1974, Saudi Arabia was also a strong advocate of a moderate oil price policy, in general, and within OPEC, in particular. For example, in October, 1975, at the OPEC meeting in Vienna, OPEC members increased prices by 10 per cent as a compromise between the 5 per cent proposed by Saudi Arabia and the 15 per cent proposed by Iran. At the 1976 OPEC meeting in Doha, only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates agreed to 5 per cent. At the 1977 OPEC meeting in Stockholm, which was held to reunify oil prices, Saudi Arabia again agreed to increase its prices by only 5 per cent. Finally, during most of 1979, Saudi Arabia was the only country charging the \$18 a barrel bottom price set by the Geneva OPEC meeting in June of that year. Other OPEC members were charging \$5 - 8 per barrel more than Saudi Arabia.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 27 October 1979. p.18.

²⁷³ Ibid..

²⁷⁴ Quandt, W. 1981, p.178.

However, as early as mid November, 1979, there was speculation that this Saudi Arabian policy might change. The British papers which reported on events in Saudi Arabia presented several reasons behind Saudi Arabia's decision.

a) **Protecting the Consumers**

Even before the Saudi Arabians decided to increase their oil price in December 1979, 'The Middle East Economic Survey' predicted that Saudi Arabia might raise its oil price. Ray Dafter, of the *Financial Times*, who highlighted this prediction stated that, "The Saudis disillusionment stemmed in part from the large third quarter profits registered by oil companies. It was felt that the benefits of lower Saudi prices had gone to the companies rather than the consumers."²⁷⁵ Similarly, and based on the same source, John Andrews of *The Guardian* highlighted that,

"It is now clear the Saudis feel, particularly in view of the colossal third quarter profits registered by the Aramco parent companies ..., that the benefits of lower Saudi prices have gone to the oil companies rather than the consumers. In such circumstances it would not be surprising if Saudi Arabia took action to raise its prices..."²⁷⁶

Hugh Davies of the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the Saudi Arabians, "... felt they had been "taken advantage of" because of the relatively low price, \$18 a barrel ... when others charged \$23.50 a barrel." He suggested that the Saudi Arabians felt that the price they were selling at had not gone to the benefit of the consumers and that it had "... been raked off by the oil companies."²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 13 November 1979. p.36.
²⁷⁶ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 26 November 1979. p.1.
²⁷⁷ Davies, Hugh. *Daily Telegraph*. 26 November 1979. p.1.

According to James Buchan of the *Financial Times*, Mr Miller, the American Treasurer who had visited Saudi Arabia to encourage the Saudi Arabians to keep their higher oil production level had said that the Saudi Arabian officials were "... very upset because they suspected that oil companies were selling Saudi oil at higher market prices instead of passing on the benefits to consumers."²⁷⁸

b) Dispelling Criticism

Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, the Kingdom's Oil Minister, confirmed that Saudi Arabia would raise its oil price in advance of the OPEC conference beginning in Caracas in December 1979. Nevertheless, Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* stressed that, "The Kingdom want[ed] to restore a rational system at a moderate level, not least to dispel criticism from other OPEC members and at home about the profit margins being given to US companies."²⁷⁹ Johns also stated that, "Saudi citizens [were] expressing increasing discontent with the differential between the Kingdom's low - priced oil and the higher rate of other producers." In addition, he wrote that "Criticism from other producers [was] one main reason why Saudi Arabia [was] anxious to realign prices at next week's OPEC meeting."²⁸⁰ A day later he wrote that, "Politically, the objective would be to defuse mounting criticism from other Arab producers of the Kingdom's moderation in holding down prices."²⁸¹ Nicholas Hirst of *The Times* explained that Islamic feeling against the West during the American Embassy

²⁷⁸ Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 26 November 1979. p.1.

²⁷⁹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 13 December 1979. p.4.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 13 December 1979. p.3.

crisis in Iran, the Mecca crisis and the failure of the Camp David Accord had "... all had their effect on the pricing policy of Saudi Arabia."²⁸²

c) Stabilising Oil Prices and Protecting OPEC's Solidarity

Saudi Arabia was presented in the British 'quality' press as attempting to stabilise oil prices and to protect the pricing structure and solidarity of OPEC. Ray Dafter of the *Financial Times*, reported that, "Saudi Arabia, the world's main oil exporter may soon bring its prices more in line with those of other crude oil producers." He explained that, "The Saudis may decide to impose their own price increase before the next OPEC ministerial conference in Caracas, Venezuela ... [because] Saudi Arabia may feel that such a move would go some way towards rationalising the oil pricing structure and towards restoring the solidarity of the organisation."²⁸³ In the same vein, and based on The Middle East Economic Survey, Roland Gribben of the *Daily Telegraph* highlighted the fact that "Saudi Arabia was likely to raise prices before the conference and disclosed that plans were being made for the gathering of key oil states to try and restore some price stability."²⁸⁴ Saudi Arabia and other countries were expected to increase their oil prices, and Duncan Campbell-Smith of the *Financial Times* claimed that, "Their planned increase represent[ed] an attempt to strengthen the hand of the moderate OPEC states ahead of the Caracas conference."²⁸⁵ Some increase in the official pricing structure was now certain and according to Ray Dafter of the *Financial Times*, the moderates would be hoping to

²⁸² Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 14 December 1979. p.21.

²⁸³ Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 13 November 1979. p.36.

²⁸⁴ Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 13 November 1979. p.21.

²⁸⁵ Campbell-Smith, Duncan. *Financial Times*. 10 December 1979. p.1.

restrain the increase "... to bring overall price levels more into balance and to help restore the pricing solidarity of OPEC."²⁸⁶

Thus, when the Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani announced in Brussels on the 12th December, 1979, that Saudi Arabia would raise its oil price from 18 dollars to 24 dollars per barrel before the OPEC meeting, which was to be held on 17th of that month, Nicholas Hirst of *The Times* assumed the move was "... to bring unity back to the OPEC pricing structure." Further, Hirst added, "... but having moved closer to the prices being charged by the 'hawks' in OPEC, the Saudis will hope that they will then be able to have a moderating influence on further price increases being demanded at the Caracas meeting."²⁸⁷ The next day, in an article entitled 'Will The Hawks Win This Time', Hirst wrote that the importance of the change was psychological.

"By breaking through the upper limit of \$23.50 fixed at the Geneva conference earlier this year, Saudi Arabia will be seen to have moved from its extreme position of attempting to hold down values to a level which ... will be easier for Saudi Arabia to agree with if other members insist on a higher price."

Hirst concluded that Saudi Arabia was gambling that by moving so far, it could "...bring other states into line, reduce selling on the spot market and ease the pressure for production cuts which could badly hurt the West."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 13 November 1979. p.36.
²⁸⁷ Hirst, Nicholas *The Times*, 13 December 1979, p.17.
²⁸⁸ Hirst, Nicholas *The Times*, 14 December 1979, p.21.

Meanwhile, David Fairhall of *The Guardian* argued that the Saudi Arabian oil price increase was "... intended to avoid another disruptive clash with the organisation's "hawks" such as Iraq, Libya and Algeria when they all meet in Caracas." He supported his argument by quoting Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani who had said that, "We managed to agree on this level so we [could] tell our partners what our price [was] now, and if you want to join us, we will be very happy."²⁸⁹

Similarly, Ray Dafter and Margaret Van Hatten of the *Financial Times* explained that the Saudi Arabian decision was "... seen in the oil industry as a further attempt by Saudi Arabia - the world's biggest exporter - to defuse some of the problems at the annual price-fixing meeting of OPEC countries which begins in Caracas, Venezuela at the end of December 1979."²⁹⁰

3.5 CONCLUSION

To sum up, Saudi Arabia was presented as a strong supporter of a moderate oil price policy compared to some other producer countries. When Saudi Arabia increased its prices slightly in favour of the desires of the 'hawk' members, the Saudi Arabian decision was seen as not having stemmed from Saudi Arabia's own desire, but from a combination of circumstances which made it not only understandable but to which it was a sensible and constructive response, designed to achieve the following aims which were shared by the West.

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Fairhall, David. *The Guardian*. 15 December 1979. p.18.

290

Dafter, Ray and Van Hatten, Margaret. *Financial Times*. 15 December 1979. p.1.2.

- a) To protect the oil consumers.
- b) To diffuse Islamic, Arab and local pressure which expressed unhappiness with the Saudi Arabian's moderate oil policy which they saw as "...helping the West..."²⁹¹
- c) To rationalise the oil price structure and protect OPEC's solidarity.

Even though, 'division within the royal family' over oil prices was seen to some extent as a factor which influenced Saudi Arabia's decision to raise its prices, this eventually came to be seen as only a momentary disruption in the process towards an increasingly positive and sympathetic image which was emerging.

²⁹¹ Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 14 December 1979. p.21.

THE MECCA CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH: 20 NOVEMBER 1979 - 18 DECEMBER 1979

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main elements of Saudi Arabia's image in the British press at the end of the first Oil crisis (1973) were the following:

- a) a Middle Eastern country with an anti-communist attitude;
- b) a moderate country in matters of oil policy;
- c) the seat and 'Guardian' of Islam's holy places; and,
- d) a country which, under its present King was, at times, in the process of emerging onto the world stage into a position of leadership in the Arab World.

These elements were reinforced during the 2nd Oil Crisis of 1979. This was essentially an external image, where Saudi Arabia was seen as if it was just as an area on the map, an entity in British foreign policy and trade. The Mecca Crisis then came and added to this external image, at least to some extent, information about what was inside the borders, images of the society, the culture and the political structure which set the external image into a domestic and social context.

On November 20, 1979, several hundred armed men attacked and seized the Grand Mosque of Mecca, Islam's holiest shrine, barricaded themselves inside the huge structure and proclaimed one of their members to be the Mahdi. *The Times* correspondent in Jeddah explained that the Mahdi

“... [was] not strictly a messiah, but he was prophesised as a divinely inspired human who would cleanse Islam.”²⁹² It took the Saudi Arabian government more than two weeks to end the uprising which was considered, “... by far the worst known internal disruption in the Kingdom since the 1920s when a rebel Ikhwan force ... was crushed.”²⁹³ It was also seen as “... the most serious challenge to Saudi Arabia since President Nasser's attempts to bring down the dynasty in the early 1960s.”²⁹⁴

In order to counter the intense speculation which existed, particularly in view of the Saudi Arabian government's announcement in the previous months of the discovery of an Iranian plot to cause disturbances during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the government announced that the attack was not connected to foreign sources. Prince Naef, the Saudi Arabian Interior Minister, declared that the incident was “... a religious deviation...”²⁹⁵ He was also reported as saying that, “... by its nature, [it was] a deviation and departure from the truth of the Islamic religion within a criminal framework and [was] far away from any political content.”²⁹⁶ When asked whether the gunmen were of a specific foreign nationality, Prince Naef stated, “There [was] no evidence which might lead us to believe that this incident [was] connected to any specific nationality.”²⁹⁷ Furthermore, Prince Saud Al-Feisal, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, affirmed this point when he “... denied that the attack was politically motivated or led by Iranian Shi'ites.” He also stated that the gunmen were mostly “...Saudis...”²⁹⁸ Similarly, in his letter to the King of Morocco, which was reported by Reuters, King

²⁹² Staff. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.6.

²⁹³ Staff. *The Guardian*. 23 November 1979. p.28.

²⁹⁴ Staff. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

²⁹⁵ Staff. *The Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

²⁹⁶ Staff. *Financial Times*. 23 November 1979. p.42.

²⁹⁷ UPI and Reuters. *The Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

²⁹⁸ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

Khaled of Saudi Arabia implied a similar meaning when he stated that "...[the] heretics who profaned the holy places in the month of Muharram were deviators from Islam..."²⁹⁹ and he denied any outside connection.

Thus, the Saudi Arabians declared that the incident was an internal matter without any connection to any foreign sources, "... the work of Muslim fundamentalists."³⁰⁰ It was carried out by "...criminal deviation from Islam..."³⁰¹ who "... had placed themselves beyond the Islamic community."³⁰² However, despite these official statements, the British papers continued to offer different reasons for the incident and argued about the identities of the group and its likely association with outsiders, albeit they also sometimes confirmed the official account. These speculations were extremely revealing about British perceptions of Saudi Arabia, its position and importance.

The four papers all argued at the outset that Iran was responsible for the attack and the seizure of the Grand Mosque. David Watts of *The Times*, based on reports from the USA, reported that the gunmen were "... Islamic militants." He speculated that, "If so, they could be acting in sympathy with the students who have occupied the US Embassy in Tehran." Watts reminded his readers that there was a Shi'ite 'minority' in Saudi Arabia compared to a 'majority' in Iran.³⁰³ In the same paper, Edward Mortimer wrote that a few weeks before the attack on the Grand Mosque, Iran was accused of attempting to disturb the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Thus, "It was natural, in the circumstances, to jump to such a

299 Reuters. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

300 Brogan, Patrick. *The Times*. 22 November 1979, p.6.

301 Staff. *The Guardian*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

302 Johns, Richard, *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

303 Watts, David. *The Times*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

conclusion about the involvement of Iran. ”³⁰⁴ However, a week after the attack took place, *The Times* admitted the innocence of Iran and that “...uncertainty...” was to blame for the “... speculation that the seizure of the attack on the Grand Mosque had been carried out by partisans of the Iranian revolution... or more alarmingly, by Shias from Eastern Saudi Arabia itself, where many Shi’ites are employed.” The paper warned that, “...such a development would be deeply worrying, not only to Saudi Arabia, but to the Gulf area as a whole.”³⁰⁵

The *Daily Telegraph* reported that Mecca had “... joined Tehran as the scene of Islamic passions boiling over.” It also blamed Iran for the accident and argued that it was “... almost certainly overflows from the ferment in Iran, though exactly how many, may not be clear for a time.” The paper explained that compared to “... the Saudi Arabian dynasty, [which] belong[ed] to the Wahhabi sect of the Sunni (orthodox) branch of Islam, there [were] many Iranian Shi’ites in Saudi Arabia.”³⁰⁶

In the same paper, John Bulloch saw the attack as a conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite branches of Islam and described the crisis as “... a terrible desecration in believers’ eyes.” He claimed that the armed men were prompted by the age-old split between the Sunni and Shi’ite division of Islam, and by “Ayatollah Khomeini ... the acknowledged leader of Shi’ism and his actions in Iran which affect his followers everywhere.”³⁰⁷ Bulloch also reported that the majority of the attackers were all Saudi Arabians and he insisted that they “... had close contacts with the Shia Moslems of

³⁰⁴ Mortimer, Edward *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

³⁰⁵ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³⁰⁶ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.18.

³⁰⁷ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.5.

Iran.”³⁰⁸ He wrote that they were “... mainly from Eastern Saudi Arabia. They were Mahdists, another sub-division of the Shia sect.”³⁰⁹

The Guardian newspaper also maintained that Iran inspired the attack on the Grand Mosque. John Andrews’ reaction to the event was that the armed men “... must be inspired by the Islamic revolution of Shi’ite Iran, thus confirming Saudi fears that the ‘Khomeini infection’ ... [would] spread beyond the borders of Iran to undermine the stability of Sunni rooted states.”³¹⁰ Furthermore, Mohammed Sodky of *The Guardian*, claimed that, based on unidentified sources, the attackers had been identified as Shi’ite Muslims from Eastern Saudi Arabia who were serving in the Saudi Arabian army. Sodky said that their intention was “... to topple the Saudi monarchy and establish an ‘Islamic republic’ on the same line as the one founded in Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini, the foremost Shi’ite leader.”³¹¹

The Financial Times, which like the other papers had initially implied that Iran was involved in the attack on the Grand Mosque,³¹² later maintained, based on “...Arab diplomatic sources...”, that “...the atmosphere generated by Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic fundamentalism [was] responsible for the attack.”³¹³ There was no evidence of direct Iranian involvement but the paper added that the events would probably “... not have occurred but for the heady calls going out from Tehran and Ayatollah Khomeini in the holy city of Qom.”³¹⁴

308 Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 November 1979. p.

309 Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 December 1979. p.4.

310 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.17.

311 Sodky, Mohammed. *The Guardian*. 24 November 1979. p.6.

312 Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

313 Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 26 November 1979. p.1.

314 Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

Another theory suggested that other Arabs or nationalists were behind the attack on the Grand Mosque. John Andrews of *The Guardian* conjectured that, "The seizure was the work of extremists, possibly Palestinians, in sympathy with Iran over occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran or possibly pressing Saudi Arabia to use the oil weapon against the United States."³¹⁵ David Watts of *The Times*, based on an unnamed 'informant', argued that the gunmen who took over the Mosque "... appeared to be South Yemenis."³¹⁶ Ihsan Hijazi of the *Financial Times* claimed that, "Many are said to come from Jizan and Najran, the Saudi district adjoining North Yemen, or [the] Yemen Arab Republic, and had received training at camps across the border...", districts which "... were reunited with Saudi Arabia in the early 1930s."³¹⁷ On the other hand, according to *The Times*, "... a group calling itself [The] Union of the People of the Arabian Peninsula..." had claimed responsibility for the seizure of the Grand Mosque and had claimed that they intended to "... trigger a pan - Islamic revolution."³¹⁸ The *Financial Times* reported that another group which called itself "...the Moslem Revolutionary Movement in the Arabian Peninsula..." had also claimed responsibility and that their intention "... was aimed directly against the Saudi royal family."³¹⁹

Finally, it transpired that the gunmen were neither Iranian nor Shi'ites, and were neither Arab nationalists nor Yemenis but were from "... Bedouin tribes of Central Arabia."³²⁰ John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out that "The 'apostates', as they branded,... were mainly from the

³¹⁵ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

³¹⁶ Watts, David. *The Times*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

³¹⁷ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 28 November 1979. p.4.

³¹⁸ UPI. *The Times*. 5 December 1979. p.10.

³¹⁹ Hijazi, Ihsan. *Financial Times*. 28 November 1979. p.4.

³²⁰ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

Otaiba tribe."³²¹ Richard Johns, of the *Financial Times*, identified them as coming "... from the Saudi heartland of the Najd."³²² Other journalists classified them as tribal people with religious motives who "... were exposed to the messianic and reformist ideas ... floating around the Moslem world...";³²³ "... religious traditionalists who [were] seek[ing] a return to the fundamentals of Islam...";³²⁴ and, "Mahdists, a sect within Islam."³²⁵ *The Times* leader of 29 November, 1979, reflecting on the event in Mecca, referred to the attack as "... the religious fervour of the desert tribes in Saudi Arabia."³²⁶

Once it became clear that the attackers were indeed from a tribally based religious sect, the questions addressed in the British press focused on why such men should attack the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca, in a country which was founded on a balance of religious and tribal forces. According to the British papers, rapid economic development, corruption, and Westernisation were the main causes.

The *Financial Times* stated that Saudi Arabia "... had become increasingly conscious of the dangers of offending conservative feelings as a result of too rapid change and the possible spread of religious extremism."³²⁷ Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* stated that, "It [was] not greatly appreciated, the extent to which the 'progressives' [in Saudi Arabia] ... have

³²¹ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 December 1979. p.4.

³²² Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24. See also Field, Michael. 29 November 1979. p.3 and Staff. 22 November 1979. p.1.

³²³ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

³²⁴ Staff. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979.p.1 and Staff. *The Guardian*. 27 November 1979.p.6.

³²⁵ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 December 1979.p.4.

³²⁶ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979.p.17.

³²⁷ Staff. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

had to take account of deep conservative feeling in pursuing development policies .”³²⁸ In a similar vein, *The Times* leader argued that the Grand Mosque incident was “... a rebelling against over rapid social change, corruption and Westernisation.”³²⁹ Further, Michael Field of the *Financial Times* believed that what inspired the tribes who stormed the Mosque in Mecca was “... disillusionment with foreign cultural influence that fast development brings.”³³⁰ *The Guardian* correspondent in Jeddah held that the group action reflected a “... wider dissatisfaction ... (with) ... the materialism brought by oil for the Saudi Arabians who feel that they have lost their soul.”³³¹ Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* also passed the same opinion but further noted that the seizure of the Grand Mosque “... appear[ed] to have been by intensely conservative forces opposed to the government’s programme of modernisation and development rather than the radical - but similarly ‘reactionary’ - ones unleashed by the Ayatollah Khomeini’s revolution in Iran.”³³²

The Times, concluded that the “... influence of wealth and contact with the West...” had caused Saudi Arabia to “... fall away from the values that they proclaimed.”³³³ This was seen as a result of,

“... undertaking the most ambitious development plan in its history. This has entailed the presence in the Kingdom of perhaps as many as 3 million foreigners and all the dislocation of traditional values inevitably resulting in the crude and self-contained town and desert societies of a country united by force and religion only 50 years ago.”³³⁴

³²⁸ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

³²⁹ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³³⁰ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 29 November 1979. p.3.

³³¹ Staff. *The Guardian*. 11 December 1979. p.7.

³³² Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

³³³ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³³⁴ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

Even though the Saudi Arabian government was able to end the Mecca Crisis, the British papers argued that Saudi Arabia might experience three main consequences as a result of the attack on the Grand Mosque. These will be examined below under the headings of a) "The 'shattered' assumption", b "Putting the brakes on development", and c) "Distancing itself from the West".

3.1.2 THE MAIN CONSEQUENCES OF THE ATTACK ON THE GRAND MOSQUE

a) "The 'Shattered' Assumption"

The assumption that the Kingdom was insulated from the religious ferment that was troubling the Islamic world by its reformist creed of Islam (Wahhabism) was "... an important assumption that the Saudis [had] made about themselves..."³³⁵, but which the attack on the Mosque had overturned. Another assumption, which the events of 1979 had changed, was that, "...there was a broad tribal consensus behind the family, whose forebears [had] founded the first Saudi domain in alliance with the reformer Mohammed bin Abdulwahab in the 18th century."³³⁶ Along the same lines, *The Times'* correspondent in Jeddah believed that the complacent "... belief that the tribes [had] been effectively won over in Saudi Arabia [had] now been shattered. So too, [had] the hope that Muslim fundamentalism [had] been satisfied."³³⁷ In the same paper and on the same day, Edward Mortimer added that the event was "... a severe blow to the prestige of the Saudi government, which had hitherto appeared to be in total control of its country and have the sanction of the religious authority on its side."³³⁸

John Andrews of *The Guardian* wrote that the impact of the Grand Mosque attack on Saudi Arabians, "... the followers of the puritanical Wahhabi interpretation of orthodox Sunni Islam, raise[d] the nightmare of a

335 Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.7.

336 Ibid.

337 Staff. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.6.

338 Mortimer, Edward. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

new brand of radicalism in the Middle East which [would] threaten both the government and the unity of Islam itself.”³³⁹

For John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph*, the event challenged Saudi Arabia on its own ground and showed the country to be “... incapable of its primary duty of protecting the holy places within its own territory...” and, with reference to the response in other Muslim countries it “... inflame[d] events outside [its] own country.”³⁴⁰

Nicholas Hirst of *The Times* believed that the events in the Grand Mosque “... [had] shown that Saudi Arabia [was] not immune from the unrest which [had] been sweeping Islam...” in general, and Iran in particular, but he went on to explain that Saudi Arabia did not have “...the same seeds for discontent, the same urban poor, ..[was].. less industrialised, less populated and most of its people .. (were) .. of a different sect to the Muslims in Iran.”³⁴¹ When the Saudi Arabian government posted armed policemen outside some other large mosques during the Grand Mosque seizure, James Buchan and John Close of the *Financial Times* concluded that the action was “... one indication that [Saudi Arabia] ... publicly recognise[d] the threat from the pulpit. More important, the attack on Mecca show[ed] that ... the government and religious establishment [had] been outflanked in their claims to hold the keys of pure and reformed Islam.”³⁴²

339 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.17.

340 Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 November 1979. p.1.

341 Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 27 November 1979. p.12.

342 Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

David Hirst of *The Guardian* maintained that the events "... must have come as a profound shock..." to Saudi Arabia and he claimed that "... not only regimes like the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'this are threatened by surgent Islam, but traditionalists like themselves who, in theory at least, have never sought any legitimacy outside the puritanial teachings of their Wah'habite faith, were also vulnerable."³⁴³

Thus Saudi Arabia was seen as a country in which Islamic and tribal forces formed the main components of the social system, and the assumption that Saudi Arabia was in control of these two forces, came to be seen as at least questionable.

b) "Putting the Brakes on Development"

The 1973-74 oil price increase allowed Saudi Arabia to conduct extraordinarily extensive development plans which brought about rapid change and with it, different values. However, the events of 1979, which were a dissatisfied response to such change, influenced the government to become "... increasingly conscious of the dangers of offending conservative feelings."³⁴⁴ The *Financial Times'* unnamed Middle East correspondent wrote that one likely outcome of the affair in Mecca would be the "... strengthening of the position of the conservatives in the leadership, particularly Prince Abdullah, "who argued against fast development."³⁴⁵ Likewise, James Buchan and John Close of the *Financial Times* assumed that, "In the longer term, the events ... must give greater weight to the conservatives within the royal family and their advisers who favour slower

³⁴³ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 10 December 1979. p.6.

³⁴⁴ Staff. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. p.42.

growth and reduced oil production.”³⁴⁶ Similarly, *The Guardian's* correspondent in Jeddah proposed that, as a result, “Saudi Arabia .. [would] .. begin a slow and thorough re-examination of its development... and take the opportunity to attack rampant corruption and hypocrisy in the country ”. He added that, “There [was] no doubt ... that new developments in the next five-year plan [would] concentrate more on rural development and less on the cities.”³⁴⁷ Michael Field of the *Financial Times* predicted that “This would mean fewer contracts in what has recently been the world’s fastest growing market.”³⁴⁸

Nonetheless, it was perceived that even before the attack on the Grand Mosque took place, the Saudi Arabian government had been “... fairly successful in controlling sensitive areas of its own making such as television and girls’ education.”³⁴⁹ The gunmen had merely made the government more sensitive and “... keen to control obvious abuses of the Wahhabite way to forestall any similar actions.”³⁵⁰ The introduction of Saudi Arabian women into the work force to replace non-Saudi Arabian females was expected to be “... a likely first casualty in the inevitable swing to Islamic orthodoxy which began ... in the wake of Iran and the Grand Mosque crisis.” Additionally, according to *The Guardian*, “The Matawyn or religious police from the Society for the Eradication of Vice and Encouragement of Virtue, [had] moved back into Jeddah wielding their sticks at those not hurrying to the call for prayers.”³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

³⁴⁷ Staff. *The Guardian*. 11 December 1979. p.7.

³⁴⁸ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 29 November 1979. p.3.

³⁴⁹ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

³⁵⁰ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

³⁵¹ Staff. *The Guardian*. 11 December 1979. p.7.

c) **“Distancing Itself From the West”**

The Times leader of 29 November, 1979, proposed that following the Mecca Crisis the Saudi Arabians were “... likely to try to distance themselves further from the West in both social and economic policies, while pressing harder their advocacy of the Palestinian cause and the Muslim claim to Jerusalem.”³⁵² It was also argued that the Mecca Crisis would reinforce “... the already strong lobby in favour of conserving oil and not satisfying the needs of the industrialised West.”³⁵³ James Buchan and John Close of the *Financial Times* claimed that the attack “... signalled trouble to the West ...”, and predicted that a cooling of the “...over- warmth in relations with the West and the USA - sponsored Egypt-Israel peace treaty were bound to be two of the more serious consequences of the [Mecca] affair.”³⁵⁴ Consequently, Saudi Arabia was expected to be “... more sensitive than ever about evidence of its continuing close, but uneasy, relationship with the US.”³⁵⁵

David Hirst of *The Guardian* concluded that, “If the house of Saudi [was] to remain what American Congressmen like to call a “bastion of stability”, it [was] going to have to respond to certain environmental pressures, and taking its distance from America [might] be one of them.”³⁵⁶ The Saudi Arabians’ “... unwillingness to make promises about future oil production levels to William Miller, US Secretary of the Treasury, was conceived by *The Times* newspaper as “... a foretaste of what [was] to

³⁵² Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³⁵³ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

³⁵⁴ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

³⁵⁵ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 12 December 1979. p.3.

³⁵⁶ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 10 December 1979. p.6.

come.”³⁵⁷ Michael Field of the *Financial Times* suggested that the Mecca affair would induce “... a reduction in oil output to take account of lower demand for revenue as a result of slower development which [would mean] fewer contracts.”³⁵⁸

Conversely, Alex Brummer of *The Guardian* in Washington argued that the “... whole [Mecca] affair could work in favour of the United States.” This was because the incident “... would encourage Saudi Arabia to strengthen its ties with the United States and the more moderate Arab nations and would ensure that oil supplies were protected... It would also mean that the Saudi Arabians would remain loyal to the US dollar.”³⁵⁹

3.1.3 THE IMPACT OF THE MECCA CRISIS ON THE MUSLIM WORLD

The whole Mecca affair highlighted the importance and place of Saudi Arabia amongst the Islamic states and communities of the world, in addition to its status as an oil power. Clear evidence of this materialised in the wave of anti-American violence following the attack on the Grand Mosque as the rumour spread that the USA had been involved in the attack.

The size and the nature of the Muslim reaction reported in the four papers affirmed the importance of Saudi Arabia and confirmed that, “The eyes of the Moslem world [were] on Saudi Arabia.”³⁶⁰ *The Times* displayed a large picture of the American Embassy in Islamabad ablaze after being

357 Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

358 Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 29 November 1979. p.3.

359 Brummer, Alex. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.18.

360 Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979 p.22.

stormed by "... mobs, angered by rumours that Americans and Israelis were behind the assault on the Great Mosque in Mecca."³⁶¹

Hugh Davies of the *Daily Telegraph* reported that, "Islamic fervour [had] spread to Pakistan ... as a mob, reported to number tens of thousands, stormed the United States Embassy in Islamabad."³⁶² According to the *Financial Times*, "Screaming crowds of Moslem students stormed the US Embassy in the Pakistan capital Islamabad, setting the building, the American flag and several vehicles on fire". The paper went on to explain that, "The incident, which coincided with the seizure of the Grand Mosque of Islam in Mecca, was duplicated in several other Pakistani cities." Anti-American feelings in general were "... inflamed by the Mecca incident."³⁶³

The Guardian wrote that an "Anti-American demonstration was reported to have been taking place throughout Pakistan ... A battle was fought between police and 2,000 to 3,000 demonstrators who surrounded the American Consulate General in the city."³⁶⁴ Hugh Davies of the *Daily Telegraph*, reporting from Washington, wrote that the anti-American feeling "... appeared to have been co-ordinated violence across Pakistan ... where American buildings were raided."³⁶⁵ In Rawalpindi, Della Denman of *The Guardian* indicated that 500-600 youths had set fire to the USA Cultural Centre and "... ransacked the empty British Council Library of furniture and books."³⁶⁶ She also reported that, "... 200 youths had broken through the gates of the catholic presentation convent, burnt doors down, ripped out

³⁶¹ Unidentified. *The Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1. See also *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

³⁶² Davies, Hugh. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

³⁶³ Staff. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.4.

³⁶⁴ Staff. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.23.

³⁶⁵ Davies, Hugh. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

³⁶⁶ Denman, Della. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.32.

telephone wires and smashed furniture.”³⁶⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* displayed a picture of “... a mob outside the American centre in Rawalpindi ... after Pakistani rioters had set fire to the building after learning of the attack by gunmen on the Grand Mosque in Mecca.”³⁶⁸

In India, violence was reported in Hyderabad and other cities when Muslims clashed with Hindus after the latter “... refused to close their shops in protest against the Mecca siege.”³⁶⁹ *The Times* printed a picture on the first page showing a group of Muslims in Delhi’s Grand Mosque burning an effigy which represented “...anti-Islamic forces...”³⁷⁰ It was also predicted that the Mecca affair could have political consequences: “The event at the Grand Mosque in Mecca and subsequent incidents of violence in India could lead to a Hindu backlash against Mrs Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party in the forthcoming elections.”³⁷¹

Edward Mortimer of *The Times* told readers that “... ‘shock waves’ from the seizure by a fanatical sect of the shrine of the Kaaba in Mecca continued to reverberate through the Muslim world ... [during] the third day of the year 1400 in the Islamic calendar.”³⁷² He went on to report the ‘shock waves’ in several Islamic countries. In Turkey, “ Muslim students shouting anti-American and anti-Zionist slogans tried to storm the residence of the US Consul General, in the city of Izmir.” In Bangladesh “... 300 students demonstrated in front of the American Embassy ... accusing the CIA of involvement in the Mecca attack.”³⁷³

³⁶⁷ Denman, Della. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.32.

³⁶⁸ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.4.

³⁶⁹ Sharma, K.K. *Financial Times*. 27 November 1979. p.4.

³⁷⁰ Unidentified. *The Times*. 24 November 1979. p.1.

³⁷¹ Sharma, K.K. *Financial Times*. 27 November 1979. p.4.

³⁷² Mortimer, Edward. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

³⁷³ Mortimer, Edward. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

3.1.4 SAUDI ARABIA AS AN ISLAMIC STATE

The result of the totally unexpected and spectacularly public eruption within Saudi Arabia, represented by the attack on the Grand Mosque, and the wave of deep and even violent concern which it triggered off in other parts of the Islamic world, led to major changes in the image of Saudi Arabia in the eyes of the British press. It became clear that the position and importance of Saudi Arabia did not just stem from its huge oil reserves and production capabilities, which allowed it to decisively influence the oil market and to largely control oil prices, neither did it just derive from the economic and financial power which the revenues from oil gave the Saudi Arabian government for playing an increasingly pivotal role in the politics of the region with respect to shaping the balance between the conflicting forces at work, namely, the balance between communist and anti-communist orientations and alignments, between the moderate and the militant approaches to the Palestinian conflict and between the fundamentalist and modernist approaches to economic and social development. All these were vital components of the image of Saudi Arabia, but the realisation also came of the full extent of the importance of the unique place which Saudi Arabia occupied for the countries of the Islamic and Arab world as the centre of Islam and as the homeland of Arab people everywhere.

An element of awareness of this aspect of Saudi Arabia had already formed part of the image before. British newspapers and their readers had certainly heard of Mecca and about the annual pilgrimage to it from all parts of the world, but they had probably pictured it as part of the distant, romantic and historical past of Saudi Arabia and of little practical relevance

today. This aspect now formed the focus of the press treatment and indeed began to be seen as a central part of the image of Saudi Arabia. In effect, the Mecca Crisis began the process of presenting Saudi Arabia as a contemporary, Islamic country, rather than as a country with an Islamic past and it led to a considerable extension of the British newspapers' understanding of what it actually means to be an Islamic country today. A spate of articles resulted from the Mecca crisis and they sought to explore and explain the above: as such they are particularly revealing and merit special examination. They began with a group of articles during the third week of November and culminated in two major articles in *The Times* and the *Financial Times*, which both appeared on 29 November, 1979.

The build up to this much more three-dimensional image of Saudi Arabia began by simply trying to explain, in the wake of the sensational events of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, what the 'Grand Mosque' was, where it was situated and why it and its location were of such manifestly huge concern and importance to people far outside the frontiers of Saudi Arabia. All the newspapers pointed out that the land which is now called Saudi Arabia did not only include the birthplace of Islam's prophet, Mohammed, and the place where the Qur'an was believed to have been revealed to him, but that it also included, the sites of the most holy places for Muslims. One of those sites was "...the Grand Mosque...",³⁷⁴ "...the sacked mosque..."³⁷⁵, "...the religious centre of the holy city of Mecca."³⁷⁶ The Grand Mosque was referred to as "... Islam's holiest shrine..."³⁷⁷, "... the Holiest of all..."³⁷⁸, and was said to be situated in Mecca "... the

374 Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

375 Denman, Della. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.1.

376 Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 21 November 1979. p.1.

377 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.18.

378 Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 November 1979. p.5.

Muslim holy city which houses the Kabba - a black stone towards which all Muslims in the world direct their faces during their prayers."³⁷⁹ With reference to the self proclaimed Mahdi, *The Times* explained that, "[The] Mahdi is a figure who appears in the Hadith or recorded sayings of Mohammed. He is not strictly a messiah but he was prophesised as a divinely inspired human being who would cleanse Islam."³⁸⁰ The two main branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi'ites, both inside and outside Saudi Arabia are believed to be waiting for his appearance.

Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* stressed the importance of the fact that Islamic law was the system which controlled many aspects of Saudi Arabia's social systems. "In practice, the ruling hierarchy [in Saudi Arabia] refer all important decisions, apart from those relating to foreign policy, to the Ulema, or religious leader."³⁸¹ Therefore, when the armed religious fanatics conducted their 'criminal deviation from Islam'³⁸² by attacking the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Saudi Arabian government did not deal with the incident as many other states would have reacted, mainly for Islamic reasons. It was these considerations that Prince Nayef Ibn Abdel Aziz, the Saudi Arabian Interior Minister, referred to when he said that, "It would be easy to storm the places where the militants were holding out but the security forces were being held back because ... they did not wish to violate the sanctity of the holy shrine."³⁸³ The *Financial Times* interpreted this action to mean that, "The Saudi Arabian Troops and the National Guardsmen were hampered in their task by the insistence of the Islamic priesthood that the

³⁷⁹ Sodky, Mohammed. *The Guardian*. 24 November 1979. p.6.

³⁸⁰ Staff. *The Times*. 23 November 1979. p.6. See also Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 22 November 1979. p.17.

³⁸¹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

³⁸² Staff. *Financial Times*. 23 November 1979. p.42.

³⁸³ UPI and Reuters. *The Times*. 22 November 1979. p.1. See also Staff. *Financial Times*. 23 November 1979. p.42.

fabric of the holy shrine should not be damaged or its sanctity fouled by unnecessary bloodshed.”³⁸⁴

Later, however, when the government was able to obtain from the Ulema [clergymen] “... a Fatwa, a religious ruling with the force of law...”³⁸⁵ which gave it permission for all means to be employed to clear the Mosque, the Saudi Arabian troops stormed the Grand Mosque and the beginning of the end of the incident started.

The gunmen were expected to face punishment “... under Sharia law, which newspapers and mosques [in Saudi Arabia] emphasised prescribed only execution for the violation of Islam’s holiest shrine.”³⁸⁶ Further, Saudi Arabian officials were also reported to have said that, “The invaders will be severely punished because the Koran prescribes dismemberment of the persons who desecrated the Grand Mosque.”³⁸⁷

This led to a highly informative leading article in *The Times* on 29 November, 1979, entitled, “The Voice of the Saudi Past”, which consolidated the idea that Saudi Arabia was founded on Islamic ideas and came to be united by forces inspired and motivated by religious aims. It stated that in 1803,

“... ‘soldiers of Allah’, led by Abdul Aziz Ibn Muhammed Ibn Saud, ... entered Mecca and destroyed all the doomed shrines where people had offered their prayers to saints rather than to God, confiscating and destroying all hookah pipes and musical instruments .”

³⁸⁴ Staff. *Financial Times*. 23 November 1979. p.42.

³⁸⁵ Staff. *The Times*. 26 November 1979. p.1.

³⁸⁶ Staff. *The Guardian*. 11 December 1979. p.7.

³⁸⁷ Nokes, Gregory R. and A.P. *The Guardian*. 26 November 1979. p.1.

The article added that one century later, the founder of today's Saudi Arabia, King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, reunited Saudi Arabia based on the same Islamic principles with an army composed of "... Wahhabi, Ikhwan or brethren."³⁸⁸ Saudi Arabia was said to be one of the few examples of an "... Islamic theocracy in the world. Like his predecessor, King Khaled is the Imam of the country, nominally its spiritual as well as temporal leader in the historic Sunni ways of things".³⁸⁹ Another dimension was added by *The Times* which wrote that it was "... the religious fervour of the desert tribes [which] represent[ed] the very origin of the Saudi state."³⁹⁰

This realisation led to an in-depth consideration, again in a highly informative fashion, of the place and role of tribalism in Saudi Arabia and, as it emerged, Saudi Arabia's position of importance amongst the other states of the region. In fact, Saudi Arabia's position and importance among the Islamic, Arabian peninsula states stemmed from its social structure, amongst other factors. One could think of Saudi Arabia as being mainly a tribal society as, unlike many other states in the region, Saudi Arabia was actually founded on tribal forces. Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* pointed out that one of the main tribal confederations of the Kingdom was the Otaiba who were "... generally reckoned to be the backbone of the regime's support. Otaiba and other selected tribes [were] the sources which provide[d] ... men for the National Guard, the paramilitary force which in the last resort [was] the arm of security for the house of Saudi."³⁹¹ *The Guardian* explained that the far centre of the country was secured and

³⁸⁸ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³⁸⁹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

³⁹⁰ Staff. *The Times*. 29 November 1979. p.17.

³⁹¹ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

supported by the tribes of Nejid, "...the heartland of the Kingdom and the traditional power base of the ruling house of Saudi."³⁹²

But how could these tribal features of Saudi Arabia enhance the country's position and importance in the region? This can only be comprehended if we realise that one of the many tribes of Saudi Arabia was the tribe of Prophet Mohammed and his lineage. It was also the family of the expected Mahdi. Reflecting on the self-proclaimed Mahdi of the group which attacked the Grand Mosque, *The Times* leader argued that the leader of the armed men, the Mahdi,

"... in many respects ... seemed to more than a few to fulfil the conditions of the prophecies. His name and patronymic were the same as the prophet's and his tribe's, the Qahgini [the family name of the gunman Mahdi] ha[d] a blood connexion with Quaraishi, Muhammed's tribe."³⁹³

On 29 November, 1979, the same day as *The Times'* long leading article appeared, the *Financial Times* published for the British readers its own extended exploration of one complex and unfamiliar aspect of Saudi Arabia, its tribal structure. The *Financial Times* argued that despite the tribal based social structure of Saudi Arabia and other Arab peninsula states being "...overlaid by a thick layer of modern immigrants ... high rise office blocks, industrial states, pocket calculators and limousines...",³⁹⁴ the lives which people lived, their attitudes to their fellow men, their social priorities, and the issues that mattered daily to them remained deeply tribe centred. Therefore, "... the political and personal relationships that mattered to

³⁹² Staff. *The Guardian*. 23 November 1979. p.1.

³⁹³ Staff. *The Times*. 6 December 1979. p.10.

³⁹⁴ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 29 November 1979. p.3.

Arabia were determined according to several tribal factors; namely the following:

1. what had happened in the past;
2. who their ancestors had married;
3. who their grandfathers had fought alongside; and,
4. what betrayals they had suffered from other families."³⁹⁵

Thus, based on such an order,

“... the most important people in the world to a Saudi ... [were] the members of the royal family ... Beyond them [were] the Nejdi, the desert tribe and towns of men of the Saudi family homeland in Central Arabia. They need not necessarily be living in Saudi Arabia. A person originally from the Nejdi now living in Kuwait will be more important in the eyes of a member of the Saudi family than a Saudi citizen.”³⁹⁶

Tribes, relationships and conflicts in the region all interlocked. There were many tribes such as the Shammer, the Otaiba, the Harb, and the Qattian to name a few which stretched across the borders of Saudi Arabia to other countries in the region such as Kuwait, Yemen and Iraq. Saudi Arabia had a special position in the region as it was the original homeland of the Arabian tribes which gave the Saudi Arabian government certain responsibilities in the region. Thus, in the case of a ‘disintegration’ of the Gulf state system, those states “... would probably divide along community lines. What might follow would be that communities of Central Arabian

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 29 November 1979. p.3.

origin in the lower Gulf would express their lack of confidence in the local ruler, [and] turn instead to the dominant Saudi family."³⁹⁷

The tribes which made up a substantial part of many Arabian peninsula states, the social structures and the power centres all looked to Saudi Arabia as the original land from where they sometimes emigrated and where parts of their tribes still lived. Therefore, domestic events in the Arabian peninsula states could be influenced by, and originate from, Saudi Arabia. Further, relationships between the states in the region could, to some extent, be influenced by the tribal structure which determined the borders between the states and that could strengthen Saudi Arabia's importance in the region as a whole, in addition to its wealth or its position as the centre of Islam.

3.1.5 CONCLUSION

The British papers' reporting of the attack on the Grand Mosque was influenced by their perceptions of the Iranian revolution (particularly in the early days), the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran, the disputes between Saudi Arabia and Yemen over border issues and the problem of the Shi'ite minority and the Palestinians who were living in Saudi Arabia. All of the above factors came to colour the image of Saudi Arabia that was presented in the British 'quality' press. These new elements brought into focus a broader realisation of the interconnections within the area as a whole and made Saudi Arabia seem less of a special entity, a world enclosed within itself, and put it more into its proper context, as a country affected by those around it and by the ferment and issues of the region as a whole.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

The speculations about the identities and aims of the gunmen who attacked the Grand Mosque added other new elements to the picture of Saudi Arabia in the British papers. It was believed at one time or another that the gunmen were Shi'ites who wanted to replace the Saudi Arabian government with a system more like Iran's in the post-Shah era, or that they were Arabs who came from countries with border disputes with Saudi Arabia, or that they were from other Arab areas and wanted to press Saudi Arabia to take a hard line against American policy in the region. Alternatively, it was speculated that the gunmen could have been a manifestation of the religious and tribal forces within Saudi Arabia's social structure, people who were unhappy with the Western and materialist orientation of Saudi Arabia and who were looking for an Islamic government based on what they took to be pure Islamic principles.

What was clear was that the hitherto 'taken for granted' stability of Saudi Arabia could, after all, be disturbed by a variety of sources. It could be disturbed by Iran, which had an ideological relationship with Saudi Arabia's Shi'ite minority in the strategic Eastern governments of Saudi Arabia, where the oil fields were located. Or, it could be disturbed by forces in Yemen, on its Southern border. Palestinians could also be another source of trouble, for more than a quarter of a million Palestinians were living in Saudi Arabia. Finally, it was realised that under the hitherto tranquil surface, or at least perceived to be tranquil surface, there were in fact internal tensions within Saudi Arabia and conflicting forces in other countries too which were going through the processes of development and modernisation: between conservatives and liberals within the ruling groups,

between tribal or religious groups and the more educated technocrat groups, and, between the urban and rural classes.

In a more general sense, the Mecca crisis marked a watershed in the evolution of the image of Saudi Arabia in the British 'quality' press, and by inference, in the minds of the critically important group in Britain which constituted its readership. The previous image which a typical reader of the 'quality' press would have had of Saudi Arabia was somewhat like the map of the world outside Europe in the 19th century after the seaborne explorations had been completed, but before the Europeans had moved inland; where the outlines were already drawn in considerable detail and the external relationships understood, but the inside was still a large, white area with a few unrelated, icon-like images which indicated what had come to them from Western markets, and some impression of the inhabitants which the merchants and explorers had met, in the shape of the figures in their national dresses. In the case of Saudi Arabia, this inner area could be coloured yellow rather than white: "the desert" and "the icons" were those of oil wells and the somewhat romanticised images of "the Arabs". As a result of the Mecca Crisis, this largely blank middle inside the frontiers began to be filled in, portraying a country, a culture, a people with their own complex and varied social, political and religious structures and a country with its own particular interplay of political, ideological, cultural and social forces. The measured, un-panicked but effective and relatively bloodless way in which the Saudi Arabian government responded to, and resolved, the Mecca Crisis also enhanced the previous image of Saudi Arabia as the country in the region with the most stable, reliable and moderate system of government.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRINCESS CRISIS

THE 'PRINCESS CRISIS' 1.

4.1 PRELUDE: 13 MARCH 1980-9 APRIL 1980.

Saudi Arabia's anti-communist position was concentrated within the Arab world during the 1970s, but it took on an international dimension in the early 1980s. As a result of its oil revenue, the Saudi Arabian government was able to engage in an extraordinarily extensive development plan based on the assumption of large-scale assistance by Western countries. In addition, a huge oil income after the 1973 oil embargo enabled the Saudi Arabians to allocate a relatively large percentage of revenue to support Third World countries like North Yemen to keep them away from the Soviet Union's influence. Perhaps the above factors could all be explained as being based on a combination of Saudi Arabia's economic interests, its security and its Islamic ideology, which encouraged relations with Christian societies and discouraged Muslim relations with those who did not believe in religion and God.

4.2 'ISLAM AND COMMUNISM WERE IRRECONCILABLE'

The image of Saudi Arabia as an anti-communist country came again to the fore in the third period of our study as a result of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. The Soviet invasion was believed to be strongly related to Saudi Arabia. The *Daily Telegraph* argued that, because the Soviets were,

“... likely to run seriously short of oil... [they] ... may be forced to take some extreme form of action to increase their oil supplies, a prediction which must not exclude the possible seizure of ... Saudi Arabian oil fields, for they would be driven to robbery by an energy crisis born of technical incompetence.”³⁹⁸

In addition to arranging an eastern gate for Gulf oil, the Soviet Union was also preparing the southern gate to reach Saudi Arabia. James Buxton of the *Financial Times* commented that, “... a Soviet - dominated North Yemen closely linked to South Yemen, where Russia has a base at Aden, would be a disaster for the West, mainly because of the danger it would pose to Saudi Arabia.” The above assumption materialised when “... South Yemen assisted a National Democratic Front invasion of the North in 1979.”³⁹⁹

The Times highlighted the role and efforts of Saudi Arabia against the continuing spread of “... radicalism in the Arab world and communism outside.”⁴⁰⁰ Following Saudi Arabia’s announcement that it would “... boycott the Moscow Olympics...” of 1980, the Saudi Arabians were given “... much of the credit for the firmness of the declaration issued by the Islamabad Meeting of Muslim Foreign Ministers ...”⁴⁰¹ against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. King Fahd actually “... spoke about the dangers of the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan.”⁴⁰²

398 Berry, Adrian. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 March 1980. p.18.
 399 Buxton, James. *Financial Times*. 2 April 1980. p.4.
 400 Staff. *The Times*. 21 March 1980. p.18.
 401 Ibid.
 402 Ibid.

King Fahd, (who was then a Crown Prince) was also reported in *The Times* as having declared that "... Islam and communism were irreconcilable..." as well as having agreed with Mr Zbigniew Brezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, who visited Saudi Arabia, "... to contribute to an aid package for Pakistan."⁴⁰³

James Buxton of the *Financial Times* reported that when developments in North Yemen led "... pessimists in Riyadh ..." to apparently fear that North Yemen might "... become the next country to fall under Soviet influence...", the Saudi Arabians were seen to have "... resumed their aid."⁴⁰⁴ This was, according to Mcilroy of the *Daily Telegraph*, after they had "... reached an agreement with neighbouring North Yemen under which the Yemenis ... would accept no more Soviet Military advisers."⁴⁰⁵ North Yemen also agreed to eventually remove the 100 Russian advisers who were "... believed to be in the country."⁴⁰⁶

Commenting after the war between the two Yemenis, James Buxton of the *Financial Times* noted that the Saudi Arabians had "... persuaded the US to speed up a long standing arms deal, over which Washington had been dragging its feet for four years, to provide a large new package of arms, including 16 F-16E fighters, 46 M60 tanks, and various anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to North Yemen." Saudi Arabia had "... paid for much of the equipment and for the teams to train the North Yemenis to use it."⁴⁰⁷ The Saudi Arabian policy towards this Arab, Islamic country was reported as

403 Ibid.

404 Buxton, James *Financial Times*. 2 April 1980. p.4.

405 Mcilroy, A.J. *Daily Telegraph*. 20 March 1980. p.1.

406 Mcilroy, A.J. *Daily Telegraph*. 20 March 1980. p.1.

407 Buxton, James. *Financial Times*. 2 April 1980. p.4.

being one of moving it "... away from the Soviet Union and their Marxist neighbours ..." ⁴⁰⁸ and "... keep[ing] North Yemen non-communist." ⁴⁰⁹

4.3 ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PRO-WESTERN

In a more general framework, British papers echoed *The Times* which wrote that, "Saudi Arabia has no relation with any non-Arab or Muslim state that could be described as communist." ⁴¹⁰ They commented that it had provided significant assistance to Arab countries which might otherwise have come under the communist influence. The British papers also continued to portray Saudi Arabia's anti-communist attitude by highlighting Saudi Arabia's economic relations with Western and free world countries as opposed to the "communist" states.

When the "... special relationship..." between Saudi Arabia and the USA "... was looking a little tarnished...", because Saudi Arabia had resisted "... heavy-handed attempts to persuade [it] to approve..." the Camp David principles between Egypt and Israel, *The Times* reported that, "...a group..." in the Saudi Arabia government, including Prince Saud Al-Feisal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had "... suggest[ed] a little distance..." from the USA. The paper explained that the Saudi Arabian position "... was a discreet campaign of satisfying needs, not to appear too much on anyone's side in the uncertain Middle East, hedging bets with Iran and the radical Arab's aid, as if a mistress, fearing her lover's indifference, was seeking proof of affection by provoking jealousy." ⁴¹¹

408 Mcilroy, A.J. *Daily Telegraph*. 20 March 1980. p.1.
 409 Buxton, James. *Financial Times*. 2 April 1980. p.4.
 410 Staff. *The Times*. 21 March 1980. p.18.
 411 Staff, *The Times*. 21 March 1980. p.18.

But, in spite of the relatively cool relations between Saudi Arabia and the USA, at least in public, the British papers continued to emphasise Saudi Arabia's economic relations with the West in general and the USA in particular, and so strengthened Saudi Arabia's image as a pro-Western country, and thus, by reason of her own Islamic character, as an anti-communist country.

John Close of the *Financial Times* stressed that Saudi Arabia's "... vastly different equipment in its armed forces..." was supplied by Western countries. "The Army is supplied by the USA and France, the National Guard and [the] Royal Saudi Air Force by the USA and Britain, and the Navy by the USA."⁴¹² *The Times* stressed that "... Saudi Arabian authorities would ... continue to invest in US dollar assets and to increase business with America."⁴¹³ The state-run Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation "... ha[d] given the go-ahead for a final agreement to be signed with the US based Mobil corporation to build a 2 billion ... petrochemical complex in the Kingdom."⁴¹⁴

Further, based on reports by Reuters, *The Guardian* highlighted the Saudi Arabia's plan to "... help finance research and development of France's new Mirage - 4000 combat planes ...', to which Saudi Arabia was prepared to "...contribute about \$685 million needed by Marcel Dassault to develop and produce the aircraft."⁴¹⁵ *The Financial Times* re-highlighted Saudi Arabia's move of one year earlier which was to "... discuss the joint production of arms with Austria..."⁴¹⁶ when Prince Sultan, Saudi Arabia's

⁴¹² Close, John. *Financial Times*. 25 March 1980. p.

⁴¹³ Unidentified. *The Times*. 19 March 1980. p.17.

⁴¹⁴ Close, John. *Financial Times*. 25 March 1980. p.38.

⁴¹⁵ Reuters. *The Guardian*. 18 March 1980. p.20.

⁴¹⁶ Close, John. *Financial Times*. 25 March. 1980, p.

Defence Minister, inspected Austrian armaments during his visit in 1979. When a group of Japanese companies signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia "... to conduct a feasibility study into a 20,000m (\$9.300) petrochemical complex on the Persian Gulf...", it was pointed out that "... this was similar to the contract which Saudi Arabia had signed with the US earlier on."⁴¹⁷ Also, according to *The Times'* correspondent, because of Saudi Arabia's consistent "... opposition to radicalism... Taiwan, and South Korea [were] fulsomely treated as the closest of friendships."⁴¹⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* also reported that millions of Saudi Arabian dollars would be "... poured into New Zealand... as part of private Saudi Arabian investment plans."⁴¹⁹

Therefore, *The Times* deemed it fit to write that Saudi Arabia's, "...moderation in oil pricing and production policies ... [was] ... frankly admitted to be intended to help the West...", because "...Saudi Arabia had always been willing to work with the US to contain radicalism in the Arab world and communism outside."⁴²⁰ According to Dr Ghazi Al-Ghosaibi, the Minister of Industry and Electricity, who was speaking to American businessmen, this could not be achieved, without co-operation between the two, namely Saudi Arabia and the West.

"Your industrial way of life for the coming decades will collapse without Arab oil. The independence of the Arab countries in the face of expanding communities cannot be maintained without your strength and resolve. No independence could be more complete."⁴²¹

417 Unidentified, *The Times*, 3 April 1980, p.22.
 418 Staff, *The Times*, 21 March 1980, p.18.
 419 Staff, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 April 1980, p.5.
 420 Staff, *The Times*, 21 March 1980, p.18.
 421 Staff, *The Times*. 2 March 1980 p.18.

The Times, which highlighted Dr Ghazi Al-Ghosabi's view, also pointed out that Saudi Arabia's anti-communist attitude stemmed from its Islamic culture. Dr Ghazi Al-Ghosaibi who "... remain[ed] of the Saudi outlook...", was reported to have maintained that,

Communism is wicked, contrary to religion, and there are no two ways about it; it is as if bred in the most extreme persuasion of an uncompromising religion."⁴²²

4.4 OIL POLICY: A 'CUSHION FOR THE WEST'

On 26 March, 1980, at the Institute of Director's Annual Convention in the Albert Hall in London,⁴²³ Sheikh Yamani, the Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, once again alerted his listeners to "... impending energy shortages (which) [meant] the world [was] facing a 'catastrophe'."⁴²⁴ He warned that "... the balance so far achieved between supply and demand should not blind the world to the fact that oil, which is the most preferred source of energy in the world, is depleting at an alarming rate."⁴²⁵ He added that, "Saudi Arabia could not forever mitigate a developing energy crisis by maintaining a high production level..."⁴²⁶ in order to "... save the world from energy shortages"⁴²⁷ It could not use its "... abundant production as a palliative to thwart shortages in world supplies ...[because]... this unrequired and sacrificial attitude on its part [would] not go on indefinitely."⁴²⁸ Sheikh Yamani blamed the "...world media for not contributing constructively

422 Ibid.

423 Tisdell, Patricia. *The Times*. 26 March 1980. p.22.

424 Staff. *Daily Telegraph* 26 March 1980. p.8.

425 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 26 March 1980. p.22.

426 Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 26 March 1980. p.36.

427 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 26 March 1980. p.8.

428 Dafter, Ray *Financial Times*, 26 March 1980, p.36.

towards informing the public of the true situation [and he] criticised Western businessmen and political leaders for hesitation and indecision about finding an alternative energy source.”⁴²⁹

The Saudi Arabian Oil Minister offered “... a six point strategy for an international energy programme which could move the world away from the edge of an abyss.”⁴³⁰ The plan included “... developing energy sources other than oil, ... greater energy conservation, ... [and] technical and financial help to develop resources in energy deprived areas.”⁴³¹ Sheikh Yamani advised that, “Unless we put these proposals into practice, the world must prepare to face recurrent events similar to those that came about in the course of 1979, but with increasingly severe consequences with each repetition.”⁴³²

Although the above “warning” by the Saudi Arabian Oil Minister was made in London a few weeks before the OPEC Ministerial Meeting in Algiers in June, 1980, at which the member states considered unifying prices, it was also coupled with a ‘declaration’ that Saudi Arabia would maintain higher oil output to ease the oil supply shortage and to keep prices stable.⁴³³

Thus, Saudi Arabia, “... the world’s leading exporter...”, announced that it would “... maintain its raised production level of 9.5 barrels a day

429 Tisdell, Patricia *The Times*, 26 March 1980, p.22.

430 Staff, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 1980, p.8. See also Tisdell, Patricia *The Times*, 26 March 1980, p.22.

431 Tisdell, Patricia *The Times*, 26 March 1980, p.22.

432 Ibid.

433 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 26 March 1980. p.8. See also Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 18 March 1980. p.20 and Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 26 March 1980. p.36 and Andrews, John . *The Guardian*. 28 March 1980. p.17.

until the oil world market return[ed] to normal..."⁴³⁴, or until Saudi Arabia was "... satisfied that the world market [was] back to normal."⁴³⁵ Saudi Arabia's move to continue maintaining oil production above its normal level was aimed at stabilising the oil market. John Andrews of *The Guardian* explained that, "The Saudi conception of 'stabilisation' [was] to kill off most spot market deals and to prepare the ground for reunification of the OPEC pricing structure."⁴³⁶ This was "... designed to restore stability to the oil market after last year's supply disruptions and price spirals."⁴³⁷ Ray Dafter of the *Financial Times* argued that the oil industry saw Saudi Arabia's oil policy "... as an attempt to prevent a new supply shortage that might have resulted in a further round of price leap-frogging."⁴³⁸ In the summer of 1980, Dafter concluded that the Saudi Arabian policy, "... would contribute to [the] unification of the OPEC pricing system abandoned last year when producers operating in a sellers' market, sought various premium payments for their oil."⁴³⁹ Meanwhile, other producers such as Kuwait, Libya and Iran cut their production to avoid a lower oil price. The *Daily Telegraph* argued that Saudi Arabia's extra one million barrels a day, above its 'ceiling' level, would "... help reduce the impact ... [and would] continue to provide an important cushion for the West."⁴⁴⁰

John Andrews of *The Guardian* held that the continuation of Saudi Arabia's higher oil production policy had "... a politically useful side effect ... to re-assert Saudi Arabia's controlling role with OPEC which disappeared

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- 434 Dafter, Ray *Financial Times*. 26 March 1980. p.36.
 435 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 26 March 1980. p.22.
 436 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 18 March 1980. p. 20. See also
 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 28 March 1980. p.17.
 437 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 26 March 1980. p.22
 438 Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 26 March 1980. p.36.
 439 Dafter, Ray. *Financial Times*. 26 March 1980. p.36.
 440 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 26 March 1980. p.8. See also
 Carr, Jonathan. *Financial Times*. 19 March 1980. p.36.

in last year's price spiral allowing 'hawks' such as Libya, Iran and Algeria to ignore Saudi protest and impose differentials."⁴⁴¹ Thus *The Times*, in an article entitled, 'Seven Nations Talks on Oil Price Rise Input', stated that a "...US official..." had revealed that the Saudi Arabian government was "... considering substantial investment to strengthen oil output to 12 million barrels per day ... [which was] ... necessary to strengthen Saudi's influence in OPEC." Moreover, the paper claimed that "... Saudi spokesmen have recently indicated that the aim is to reach the 17 million level by 1984."⁴⁴²

4.5 CONCLUSION

In spite of Saudi Arabia's development plans, which in fact required a high revenue, its oil policy was perceived and presented from the time of the oil embargo of 1973-74 as being designed to keep oil prices relatively low, at least compared to other producers. This was either achieved by reducing its oil prices or by increasing its production level. Thus, Saudi Arabia provided the West with a vital 'oil cushion' in addition to supporting it politically through continuing to exert a stabilising and moderating influence over the Arab and Islamic world against the spread of communism and religious radicalism.

⁴⁴¹ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 18 March 1980. p.20.

⁴⁴² Unidentified. *The Times*. 19 March 1980. p.17.

**THE 'PRINCESS CRISIS' AND ITS AFTERMATH: 10 APRIL 1980-8
MAY 1980.**

It was against this multifaceted but 'untroubled' background image of Saudi Arabia, which was well established in the British 'quality' press by 1980, that for the second time an internal Saudi Arabian event became a major focus for the British media and resulted in some modifications to the image of Saudi Arabia which was portrayed in the British press. This came as a result of the making, and then the subsequent showing by the ITV network, of the documentary, *'The Death of a Princess'*, and the diplomatic furore between Britain and Saudi Arabia which followed and which led, at one stage, to the expulsion of the British ambassador.

There were three principal results of this affair and of the massive amount of coverage which it received in the British media. One was that for the first time, something more like a distant awareness of the existence of a country called Saudi Arabia developed amongst the 'ordinary' British public, in addition to the numerically much smaller numbers of the informed and educated sections which formed the readership of the 'quality' press. Whereas before, one could not realistically talk about a 'popular image' of Saudi Arabia, owing to the lack of any reasonably consistent and coherent coverage of Saudi Arabia by the British 'popular' press and television, by the time the Princess affair was over, the 'ordinary public' of Britain had received some image of Saudi Arabia as a country, with its own political system and culture. An exploration of the 'popular image' presented by the 'popular' media, interesting as it would be, does not however form a part of this study, though it would be an interesting, future research topic.

The second result of 'The Death of a Princess' affair was that the group forming the readership of the 'quality' press in Britain received, through their newspapers, an intensive further exploration of the complex issues first brought to their attention by the Mecca Crisis, namely, the social and religious structure of Saudi Arabia.

The third, and in many ways the most important and interesting result, was that it presented the readers of the 'quality' press with a chance to examine their own attitudes towards the role of these features of Saudi Arabia in Britain's policy towards, and Britain's relationship with, Saudi Arabia. This was all the more timely because Saudi Arabia's Development Plan (1976-1980) required a high level of Western expertise and many Westerners were working in the country during this period with the British participants forming one of the largest sectors. There were more than 30,000 British people working on various projects in Saudi Arabia during that four year period alone.

There is a sense in which *'The Death of a Princess'* programme could itself be seen as documenting, if not arising from, the 'culture shock' which these British engineers, craftsmen and businessmen, who were largely from outside the 'quality' press readership group, had received when they encountered Saudi Arabian culture and society during a period of development and transition of almost breakneck speed.

4.1.1 'THE DEATH OF A PRINCESS'

Intrigued by the reported public execution of a Saudi Arabian princess and her lover in Riyadh in 1977, Anthony Thomas and David Fanning wrote and produced an investigative documentary which set out to ascertain what might have actually happened. The principal author of the film, in terms of research and treatment, was Anthony Thomas and the result was described by Jack Shaheen, the author of *The TV Arab*, one of the books which the affair generated, as "...Thomas' version of the execution."⁴⁴³ The documentary was completed in the summer of 1980 and was shown on the ITV network on 9th April, 1980, after intense Saudi Arabian pressure to persuade the ITV to shelve the programme had failed. The film was made as a joint production with an American company and was pre-sold to be shown in the USA and several continental European countries following its premiere on British television.

On the one hand, the film presented some quality images of the country, such as its development into a relatively modern state and how Islam was applied and respected in the country. On the other hand, the film provided mainly negative images about Saudi Arabia's culture in general, and women in particular, as it argued that women were not only repressed in Saudi Arabia but were also confined to leading empty lives, both sexually and generally. The sequence in the film to which particular attention was paid showed both the Saudi Arabian women's search for, and the picking up of, men from Saudi Arabia's streets. The film also argued about the ineffectiveness of Islam and suggested that Saudi Arabia still suffered from

⁴⁴³ Shaheen, J. 1984. p.72.

its old authoritarian, moral and religious codes despite the formal introduction of more modern ones. Further, it argued that even though Saudi Arabia claimed to be an Islamic country it was not fully so because the pre-Islamic tribal laws were still in use. The film implied that Saudi Arabian families were not only backward, but heartless, as the film conjectured that the Princess was, in fact, still alive and that a Bedouin family had been paid to substitute one of its daughters for execution instead of the Princess herself. Finally, the film presented one of the prominent members of Saudi Arabia's royal families in a very bad light.

4.1.2 BRITISH PRESS VIEWS OF 'THE DEATH OF A PRINCESS'

The views presented in the British 'quality' papers gave different, and rather contradictory, interpretations of the film as journalists compared what the film had said about Saudi Arabia to what they believed Saudi Arabia to be. The latter views led to some support for the Saudi Arabian stand against the film. The *Daily Telegraph* leader of 24 April, 1980, which criticised that aspect of the film that focused on the position of women in Islam, maintained that, "Some aspects of the film, in particular its fictionalised smears against some aspects of the position of women in Islamic societies, would have been regarded as an insult against that world as a whole." The paper went on to describe Saudi Arabia as the "... leader of Islam and custodian of its holiest places."⁴⁴⁴

The Times, which saw the programme as belonging to that "... artistically promising, but factually treacherous class of dramatised documentaries ...", argued that the programme was "... a ruminative look at

⁴⁴⁴ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 April 1980. p.18.

Islam, focusing on a particular scandalous episode containing many contradictory statements and expressions of opinion.” The paper explained that even though “... it was not a consistently hostile or biased production... there was much about it to cause offence in Saudi Arabia.”⁴⁴⁵

Edward Mortimer of *The Times* wrote that the film was “... only the culmination of a series of attacks on Saudi Arabia in the British media...” and argued that such attacks “... are seen as having been prompted by those opposed to Saudi Arabia's stand on the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel.”⁴⁴⁶ In the same vein, John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph* argued that the film was “... particularly obnoxious to the Saudis...”, and he commented that the programme “... was deeply critical of life among the upper strata of Saudi Arabian society ...[as it]... alleged that Saudi Arabia merely paid lip service to the tenants of Islam while privately carrying on a free wheeling lifestyle .”⁴⁴⁷

While some journalists viewed the film as an attack on Saudi Arabia, others, such as Robert Schuil of *The Times*, perceived the film as “...a well-balanced journalistic product...” and he saw “... no reason not to go ahead with televising the programme...” because the film was not an attack on Islam, as the Saudi Arabians “... [had] chosen to see it...”, which showed their “... vulnerability to the threat of the film.”⁴⁴⁸ The film only examined how the public execution come to be carried out “... in the context of

⁴⁴⁵ Staff. *The Times*. 11 April 1980. p.15. Also see Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.1 and Dezullea, Philip. *The Times*. 15 April 1980. p.15 and Khan, Maqsd Hussain. *The Guardian*. 7 May 1980. p.14.
⁴⁴⁶ Mortimer, Edward. *The Times*. 1 May 1980. p.8. See also Hooper, John and Knewstub, Nikki. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.20.
⁴⁴⁷ Bulloch, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 April 1980. p.1.
⁴⁴⁸ Schuil, Robert. *The Times*. 16 April 1980. p.7.

Koranic precept and Saudi practice.”⁴⁴⁹ Further, for Jeremy Bray of *The Times*, the film was

“... unusually sensitive and sympathetic, ... respectful to Islam, to Arab family relationships ... in particular, it allowed Arabs of varying degrees of Islamic fundamentalism and liberation to state their views and offer other interpretations of events.”⁴⁵⁰

Thus, if the Saudi Arabians actually “... saw the programme, they would find it sympathetic.”⁴⁵¹ The film was not viewed as a bad one by *The Guardian* and if it was, then “... it could have been dismissed by British viewers and by offended Saudis as a vulgarity, another of the kind to which Arabs have become accustomed through unnumbered lampoons .”⁴⁵²

In addition to the above views, there was another view which argued that the problems around the film arose from cultural or communication misunderstandings which existed as a result of the differences between the British and Saudi Arabian cultures. *The Times* leader of 11 April, 1980, entitled, ‘Slight Cause of Mutual Incomprehension’, admitted that,

“A certain mutual incomprehension has to be admitted. We have difficulty in understanding or approving the rationale of [Saudi Arabia’s] tariff and forms of judicial punishment.”⁴⁵³

Likewise, the *Daily Telegraph* leader of 11 April, 1980, entitled, ‘Clash of Culture’, stated that Britons “... may not like [Saudi Arabian] ways, but that is how they run their country, just as this is how we run

⁴⁴⁹ Staff. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.12.

⁴⁵⁰ Bray, Jeremy. *The Times*. 14 April 1980. p.15.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid..

⁴⁵² Staff. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.12.

⁴⁵³ Staff. *The Times*. 11 April 1980. p.15.

ours.”⁴⁵⁴ Saudi Arabians should understand our position and “... in the same way we should attempt to understand theirs.”⁴⁵⁵ Therefore, the media should take “... greater steps ... in future, to portray the facts of life in Saudi Arabia in a more balanced and less sensational way, and ... there [would] be greater understanding on both sides, of our different ideologies.”⁴⁵⁶

Others took a hard line view and argued that the film only reflected the true reality in Saudi Arabia where contradiction and hypocrisy exists: *The Guardian* seemed to emphasise this view more than the other papers. John Andrews of *The Guardian* perceived the film as having “... revealed the rottenness at the core of the Kingdom - the picking up of men by veiled women in chauffeur driven cars...” and he argued that the film “... uncover[ed] the hypocrisy of a regime torn between its commitment to an especially ascetic tradition of Islam and the hedonistic encroachments of an oil-financed materialism.” Andrews concluded that, “The Princess' fault was not to love a man who was not her husband, but to be caught in a country [where]... the double standard of public propriety and private immorality can remain pervasive only if it remains hidden.”⁴⁵⁷

Khan, of *The Guardian*, saw the film as being “... successful in showing the dilemmas and contradictions which exist today in Saudi society...”, but he thought that it only “...showed a little of the truth about the hypocrisy that exists in Saudi Arabia.” Further, the director of the film “... [had] not shown anything which [was] not common knowledge to the

⁴⁵⁴ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 April 1980. p.18.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid..

⁴⁵⁶ Syer, C.J. and Others. *The Times*. 30 April 1980. p.17.

⁴⁵⁷ Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.11.

people in Saudi Arabia, [but] what he [had] done [was] an honest attempt in breaking the wall of silence that exist[ed] in the media about Saudi Arabia."⁴⁵⁸

James Buchan, of the *Financial Times*, implied that contradictions existed in Saudi Arabia between "... the rigours of an Islamic court and rough family justice ..." and he argued that the film stressed how "... death, on charges of adultery, ... was not exposed to an Islamic court ..."⁴⁵⁹, the Saudi Islamic laws. The execution of the princess was therefore in violation of Islamic law as,

"The Saudis have never provided the rest of the Arab world with any explanation of why the princess was not given a proper trial, nor why King Kaled as leader of Saudi Arabia's royal clan, did not prevail upon Prince Muhammed, the Princess' father, to punish her indiscretion in some other way."⁴⁶⁰

Anthony Dig of *The Guardian*, presumed that the film reflected the truth about Saudi Arabian barbarities, as he wrote that,

"If it is right for the media to produce an endless stream of dramatisation based on German atrocities committed over 30 years ago, then the films exposing barbarities being perpetrated in the world today are even more relevant."⁴⁶¹

458 Khan, Ali Basha. *The Guardian*. 14 April 1980. p.10.
 459 Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.3.
 460 Watts, David. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.8.
 461 Dig, Anthony. *The Guardian*. 14 April 1980. p.10.

4.1.3 THE PRESS AND THE DIPLOMATIC INCIDENT ARISING FROM THE PROGRAMME

The government of Saudi Arabia tried to keep the film off the screens by directly approaching the production company, ITV, and they also tried to persuade the British government to intervene and get the programme dropped. When all of this had failed and the programme had been transmitted as made, the Saudi Arabians asked the UK ambassador to leave the country. This was only the second time since the creation of Saudi Arabia that relations with the UK had been broken off. The first time was in 1956, as a compound result of the Suez crisis and probably as a result of dissatisfaction over the British stand taken over the Burimi Oasis in the south of the Arabian peninsula in the mid-1950s. The diplomatic row between Saudi Arabia and Britain now became the focus for press coverage and comments which related to the nature of the relationship between the two countries. This significantly added a number of elements to the existing image of that relationship.

The Times reported that the Saudi Arabian government had tried to keep the film off the screens and had also "... expressed concern over the broadcasting of the film to the British government."⁴⁶² *The Guardian* reported that the Saudi Arabians believed the film to be "... very offensive to the whole Saudi royal family and [their] country ... We have our own laws and our own morals which we keep to ourselves...", and it was therefore "...difficult for anyone in England to understand the moral issues on this matter from the Saudi Arabian point of view."⁴⁶³ In an effort to

⁴⁶² Staff. *The Times*. 10 April 1980. p.6.

⁴⁶³ Hooper, John and Knewstubb, Nikki. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.1.

make the British government's position clear, Lord Carrington, the Foreign Secretary, sent ".... a placatory message ..." to Saudi Arabian leaders and stated on behalf of the government that, "We regret any damage that might be done to Anglo-Saudi relations..." but he emphasised that "... in any case, we have neither the power nor the inclination to interfere in a television broadcast."⁴⁶⁴

David Watts, of *The Times*, reported that Lord Carrington's statement had led to a debate in Parliament, during the course of which, some "... Members of Parliament... [had] accused Lord Carrington of "crawling" to the Riyadh government and apologising to a 'reactionary feudal state'."⁴⁶⁵ Tom Torney, Labour MP for Bradford South, commenting on the British government's message of apology to Saudi Arabia, was reported in *The Guardian* to be "... disgusted and dismayed to see that we are apparently getting on our knees to these sadistic types who obviously do not like the truth".⁴⁶⁶ *The Guardian*, which affirmed the attitude of some members of the British Parliament, displayed a large cartoon in the middle part of the upper section of the front page which depicted Lord Carrington on his knees praying towards the Middle East and Saudi Arabia's oil fields.⁴⁶⁷ Conservative MP for Luton West, Mr John Carlisle, took a similar stance to that of David Winnick, Labour MP for Walsall North, who was reported by Tony Conyers in the *Daily Telegraph* as saying that, "It was undignified to see a British Foreign Secretary virtually apologising to a reactionary feudal state about a television film shown in this country,... [thus]..., Lord Carrington's stance is a bit regrettable."⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁴ Staff. *The Times*. 10 April 1980. p.6.

⁴⁶⁵ Watts, David. *The Times*. 11 April 1980. p.1.

⁴⁶⁶ Hooper, John and Knewstub, Nikki. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.20.

⁴⁶⁷ Hooper, John and Knewstub, Nikki. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.1.

⁴⁶⁸ Conyers, Tony. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 April 1980. p.1.

During the following two weeks, the newspapers also reported extensively on Saudi Arabia's efforts to persuade ITV to cancel the programme, or at least, to omit parts of it. The Saudi Arabians were not satisfied with the British government's stand towards the film. They might "... accept that items they found offensive were not actually inspired by the British government..." however, they found "... it hard to understand how [UK] ministers could stand by and let such material be transmitted."⁴⁶⁹ In addition, it appeared that the views expressed by some of the MPs towards Saudi Arabia's stand against the film, might further have angered the Saudi Arabians. In order to keep the film, or at least part of it, off the screen and minimise its spread and effect, the Saudi Arabians took several steps. I propose to divide them into three types: the first one can be seen as a media approach, the second one as a political approach and the third one as an economic approach.

Having been unable to persuade the production company, or the ITN network, to agree to either the cutting of the programme or the cancellation of its transmission, and having been angered by MPs comments, and being unhappy with the lack of British government intervention concerning the film, the Saudi Arabian government was unable to accept the situation and on 23 April, 1980, Saudi Arabia took formal diplomatic steps. The Saudi Charge de affairs in London issued a statement which said that the film was part of a "... fierce and malicious campaign directed against Saudi Arabia on television and the other information media in Britain and was aimed at [the] King, the Islamic Shariya and the traditions of the Saudi people."⁴⁷⁰ At the

⁴⁶⁹ Comfort, Nicholas. *Daily Telegraph*. 18 April 1980. p.36.

⁴⁷⁰ Comfort, Nicholas. *Daily Telegraph*. 18 April 1980. p.36.

same time, on 24 April, 1980, the British 'quality' press also reported that Saudi Arabia had asked the British Ambassador to leave their country and had refused to send their new Ambassador to London.⁴⁷¹ King Khaled of Saudi Arabia was said to be "... offended..." by the film and was reported in *The Times* to have "... cancelled plans for a state visit to Britain."⁴⁷² Likewise, a visit to Saudi Arabia by Francis Pym, the UK Secretary of State for Defence, was reported in the *Financial Times* to have been "... cancelled at Riyadh's insistence."⁴⁷³ In addition, Prince Abdullah, the Crown Prince, was "...expected to press Sheikh Zayed [of the United Emirates] for concerted Arab action against Britain over the showing of the programme."⁴⁷⁴

Unfortunately, from the point of view of the reporting of these diplomatic steps in the British 'quality' press, the Saudi Arabian's efforts to stop the showing of the film, or at least to omit parts of it, backfired, and led to Saudi Arabia being projected as a country which wanted to control the media and curtail the freedom of speech in the UK. Thus, *The Guardian* held that the Saudi Arabian's actions must [have been] "... an attempt either to alter an English law or to put pressure on British companies, television companies in particular, to apply a new form of censorship." The paper concluded that, "The Saudi's must certainly know that neither attempt will succeed."⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, *The Times* leader of 24 April, 1980, entitled, 'No Cause to End a Friendship' explained that "... for as most Saudi officials must know, the British government do not, and shall not, have the power to

⁴⁷¹ Spanier, David. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.1.

⁴⁷² Staff. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.1. See also Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 April 1980. p.1.

⁴⁷³ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.1.

⁴⁷⁴ Staff. *The Times*. 28 April 1980. p.6.

⁴⁷⁵ Staff. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.12.

cancel television programmes.” The paper pointed out that, “This is one of those British customs that foreigners must do their best to understand.”⁴⁷⁶ Similarly, Timothy Sullivan of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that, “If broadcasters are to have to look abroad every time so as not to offend potential traders or political allies we will have the pleasant face of true freedom of expression removed from our shores once and for all.”⁴⁷⁷

In response to Saudi Arabia’s diplomatic moves, the British Foreign Secretary sent a second letter to the Saudi Arabian leaders expressing, once again, the British government’s position. *The Times* reported that, unlike the previous letter, this was not seen as ‘regrettable’ or ‘undignified’ by a number of British MPs, but rather the MPs blamed the media for upsetting the Saudi-UK relationship.⁴⁷⁸ In *The Guardian*, Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley East), the Labour Arts Spokesman, was reported as having criticised the film and argued that “... the irresponsibility and self-interest of some of the bright boys of the media - both in TV and in the public prints - who make political attacks under the guise of entertainment - frequently damage British interests.”⁴⁷⁹ Nicholas Winterton Conservative MP for Macclesfield, was reported by *The Guardian* to have claimed that some MPs expressed to him the view that, “They would like to apologise to the Saudis.”⁴⁸⁰ Some other Conservative MPs were reported in the *Financial Times* to have asked the government to ensure that, “... these left wingers do not have the power to undermine the best interests of the UK.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁶ Staff. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.17.

⁴⁷⁷ Sullivan, Timothy R. *Daily Telegraph* 14 April 1980. p.20.

⁴⁷⁸ Staff *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.10.

⁴⁷⁹ Staff. *The Guardian*. 25 April 1980. p.16.

⁴⁸⁰ White, Michael. *The Guardian*. 25 April 1980. p.2.

⁴⁸¹ Hunt, John. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.9.

But why did Saudi Arabia react so strongly long after the programme had been shown? David Watts of *The Times* suggested that Islamic and domestic pressure was one explanation for the Saudi Arabian decision as they wanted "... to present a more Islamic face to the world both at home and abroad." He felt the Saudi Arabian decision "... was apparently taken after consultation with other Islamic governments and the expression of widespread anger in the Arab world." Watts, who expected that "... further sanctions were likely against any other country which show[ed] the film, up to and including, a demand for the recall of ambassadors...", suggested that further measures would probably be announced after the meeting of the Islamic Foreign Ministers.⁴⁸² In the same vein, the *Financial Times* suggested that the Saudi Arabian move was "... demonstrating to both domestic and Moslem opinion that they [were] prepared for tough actions in defence of Saudi Arabia...⁴⁸³ the Guardian of the holiest places in Islam."⁴⁸⁴

Division within the royal family was also seen to be a reason for the Saudi Arabian move. Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* argued that Saudi Arabia's action was "... motivated largely by domestic considerations..."⁴⁸⁵ within what David Watts of *The Times* described as "... the purview of the Saudi royal family who felt directly insulted by the programme."⁴⁸⁶

Most papers seemed to agree that the diplomatic move was a warning sign to other countries not to show the film. Nicholas Hirst of *The Times* held that "... the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia

482 Watts, David. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.8.

483 Staff. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.22.

484 Watts, David. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.8.

485 Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.1.

486 Watts, David. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.8.

[was] becoming more and more ambivalent ...”, and he argued that the Saudi Arabian leaders “... may simply wish to wrap Britain on the knuckles for failing either to stop or to apologize sufficiently abjectly for the showing of the television film ... but, it could also be a way of giving a more general warning to America and the West.”⁴⁸⁷

Richard Johns of the *Financial Times*, based on unidentified 'diplomats', argued that the Saudi Arabian move was not “... only a protest to Britain, but also a warning to other countries not to show the film and to restrain their media from casting Saudi Arabia in a bad light.”⁴⁸⁸ In the same vein and on the same day, 24 April, 1980, John Hooper of *The Guardian* also suggested that the Saudi Arabian decision to ask the UK ambassador to leave their country was a “... warning to other countries not to show the film.”⁴⁸⁹ Thus, the *Financial Times* leader on 25 April, 1980, entitled the 'Saudi Displeasure' was fairly accurate in its conclusion that, “... The Saudi government can already take comfort that the publicity given to their gesture has conveyed to other Western governments their sense of outrage over the showing of the film.”⁴⁹⁰

Amid the adverse reporting of Saudi Arabia's action, some aspects of Saudi Arabian culture and ideology emerged as well and not all the elements within the image were negative. In general, the Saudi Arabian's were seen as “... friendly...”⁴⁹¹, “... extremely honest, courteous and hospitable,... devoted Moslems with strong family ties and ... a proud, nationalistic

487 Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.21.

488 Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 24 April 1980. p.1.

489 Hooper, John. *The Guardian* 24 April 1980. p.1.

490 Staff. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.22.

491 Syer, C.J. *The Times*. 30 April 1980. p.17.

race."⁴⁹² Due to these qualities, they had "... always been among the most sensitive of Third World countries to Western comment that offend[ed] national or religious pride."⁴⁹³

Ideologically, some of the Saudi Arabians were described as "...pragmatic or practical..."⁴⁹⁴, with a recognisable mixture of Islamic and Western thinking, but who personally experienced "... considerable individual conflict as a result of their education and exposure to Western ideology, as they strove to equate the new with the old and establish a realistic working relationship between the two in their mother country."⁴⁹⁵ However, "... this group rarely reflect[ed] the true feeling of those at the heart of Saudi power or the law makers."⁴⁹⁶

John Hooper of *The Guardian* considered that an "... element of hypocrisy..." could also be noticed in Saudi Arabian society, namely, "... between the poor and the rich Saudis who [drank] and gamble[d] abroad..." but kept ... severe punishment for those who [did] so at home."⁴⁹⁷ The rich people in the Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, were "... able to lead a free-wheeling life style and merely observed the ritual of Islam in public. And, when they travelled abroad ... [they] were quick ... in adopting western ways of dress, dance, and manners." Yet,

"The tiny handful [of Saudis] ... who live[d] it up in the West... [was] not the whole story ... and should not be used to represent and judge the five million population of Saudi Arabia."⁴⁹⁸

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- 492 Blades, J.P. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 May 1980. p.18.
 493 Staff. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.22.
 494 Chapman, Rod. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.12.
 495 Syer, C.J. and Others. *The Times*. 30 April 1980. p.17.
 496 Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.3.
 497 Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 22 April 1980. p.26.
 498 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 April 1980. p.34.

One Arab diplomat pointed out in the *Daily Telegraph* that such allegations were comparable to "... assuming that the antics of the people who appear[ed] in London gossip [were] typical of everyone in England."⁴⁹⁹ In addition, it should be remembered that Saudi Arabian society was never homogenous as another division existed between 'Bedouin' and 'urban' elites.

John Andrews of *The Guardian*, in an article entitled 'The Secrets that Stay Behind the Veils', compared Saudi Arabia to other similar Gulf states and explained that in the latter states:

"The hypocrisy is less dangerous - miscreants and puritans are part of the same homogenous societies. But Saudi Arabia - two thirds the size of India and with a population of around five million - is different... [because] ... the behavioural gap between Bedouin families, fresh from the desert, and a decadent urban elite is too glaring to be publicised. Instead, the radio and television must pump out a sanitised pretence that everyone, from goat herd to merchant millionaire, conforms to the same social rule."⁵⁰⁰

Andrews added that in Saudi Arabia there were "... double standards of public propriety and private immorality... [which could] ... can remain persuasive only if they remained hidden."⁵⁰¹

The British papers portrayed two rather different views of Islamic laws and the position of women within them in the context of Saudi Arabia. In the *Daily Telegraph*, H.K Sarguroh wrote that:

499 Ibid.

500 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.11.

501 Ibid.

“Islam is totally oriented spiritually, depriving instructions concerning every aspect of life from cradle to the grave from a Revelation called Quran that inspires every action in conformity to the Will of the Revealing Deity whose supreme name is Allah.

The Roman background of European culture is not so spiritually oriented and is open to modifications and revisions. Sovereignty rests with the people in a state of affairs where there are things of God and things of Caesar.

In the Islamic perspective, there is nothing that does not concern Allah and hence sovereignty rests in Him. Laws of Islam enshrined in [the] Quran are compulsive and command obedience from its followers.

Every Moslem true to his salt senses rather than merely understands the values implicit in the traditional forms of Islam and has a distaste for the fluctuating temporal laws masquerading as the epitome of refinement, attempting to proselytise Islam.”⁵⁰²

The *Daily Telegraph* also stated that visitors to Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, “... soon realise that Islam is part of the life of the people far more than Christianity is in Europe ... [and] ... are made immediately aware of the unselfconscious pity of the mass of ordinary people.” For example,

“When one of the five daily times of prayer comes round, it is common for people to unroll a small mat and go through the ritual wherever they may be - in a busy airport-lounge, in a shop, or on a traffic island surrounded by hurrying cars.”⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Sarguroh, H.K. *Daily Telegraph*. 23 April 1980. p.18.
⁵⁰³ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 April 1980 p.34.

Yet, Islamic laws in general, and particularly those in Saudi Arabia, which follows "... a fundamental and strict version of Islam known in the West as Wahhabism..."⁵⁰⁴, were projected in the British papers in a generally negative tone, as involving "... draconian penalties... [and] ... being out of date."⁵⁰⁵ Stoning to death, the Islamic penalty for adultery, was particularly perceived as an example of these "... draconic laws and punishments."⁵⁰⁶

David Guildford pointed out in *The Times* that the 'Koran', 'Sunnah' and 'Ijma' or consensus, were the fundamental principles of Islamic laws but exemplified certain Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia, as ones which traditionally imposed them with "... excessive severity of punishments especially with regard to penalties for adultery, ...theft ... and polygamy."⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, the Saudi Arabians "... must have found themselves torn by the severity of punishment in violation of the divine norm of Islam."⁵⁰⁸ In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* entitled, 'Barbaric Behaviour', a reader regarded Islam "... with revulsion..." and described Islamic Saudi Arabian law as "... a barbarity ... [which could not] ...be excused because it [was] perpetrated in the name of some particular religion."⁵⁰⁹

The British 'quality' press also criticised the position of women in the Saudi Arabian Islamic system which was projected as repressive. Saudi

504 Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.3.
 505 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 April 1980. p.18.
 506 Tillner, Barbara. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 May 1980. p.13.
 507 Guildford, David. *The Times*. 30 April 1980, p.17.
 508 Sarguroh, H.K. *Daily Telegraph*. 23 April 1980. p.18.
 509 Chamber, Alistair. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 April 1980. p.20.

Arabia, "... a state whose constitution is the Koran...",⁵¹⁰ was seen to by Barbara Tillner of the *Daily Telegraph*,

"...[to] present a total patriarchy and indeed has incurred adverse votes in the United Nations on account of its disregard for women's rights, based though it is on the Koran. The Koran asserts the superiority of man over woman, advocates punishment if she objects, and permits polygamy - up to four wives - if the husband can support them."⁵¹¹

John Andrews of *The Guardian* compared Saudi Arabia to other Arab countries and wrote that,

"Even to the Arab of Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf, the Saudi brand of sexual apartheid smacks of a sinister repression ... women cannot shop alone, they cannot study with boys, they cannot be taught by males except via close circuit television, they cannot drive, they cannot travel except with a close male relative - and least of all can they consort unchaperoned with male friends."⁵¹²

With regard to the areas of employment available to women, John Buchan of the *Financial Times* wrote that women, who made "... at least half the potential Saudi work force, ... [were] severely restricted."⁵¹³ Time did not seem to bring only progress, as the 1979 upheavals, "... prompted the ban on women travelling alone... [and] ... on women working alongside men."⁵¹⁴ After the Grand Mosque attack, and to satisfy the conservatives, Crown Prince Fahd (now King Fahd) declared that as well as the restrictions

510 Cayton, Sylvia. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 April 1980. p.15.

511 Tillner, Barbara. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 May 1980. p.13.

512 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.11.

513 Buchan, James. *Financial Times*. 16 April 1980. p.4.

514 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.11.

that had already been imposed, "Saudi women would no longer be allowed to take up a scholarship abroad even with a male companion."⁵¹⁵ Barber Tillner of the *Daily Telegraph*, who referred to Jeddah, one of the most developed cities in Saudi Arabia, as "... a highly restricted international building site...", pointed out that a new law had been passed in Saudi Arabia which "... triggered off a witch-hunt against Western women by extending ... [to them]... the already existing ban on Saudi women from taking jobs which caused them to work within public view."⁵¹⁶ Following the passing of the new law, the American corps of engineers and contractors who were working for the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defence were "... told to stop employing women."⁵¹⁷ At the same time, three hundred women employees of Mobil oil "... retreated shocked, behind (the) company's closed office doors, protected from such restriction by the privileged position of the Mobil empire in Saudi Arabia." However, the privileged position of Mobil women,

"... [and] specialist or professional, married women from the Western countries ... exempted from the ban ...
... made little difference, since to go unveiled in Saudi Arabia would mark a woman as a prostitute or bad influence of some kind... [because] ... unveiled women would be looked at askance in Saudi Arabia."⁵¹⁸

Yet, as John Andrews of *The Guardian* wrote, "... outside the Kingdom, all is possible. Before the Lebanese civil war, Saudi Arabian girls would flock to the American University of Beirut and Beirut College for Women to flirt outrageously with macho males from the rest of the Arab world." When eventually, "... Beirut and Lebanese mountain resorts went as a result of the

⁵¹⁵ Staff. *The Guardian*. 7 May 1980. p.1.

⁵¹⁶ Tillner, Barbara. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 May 1980. p.1.

⁵¹⁷ Staff. *The Guardian*. 7 May 1980. p.1.

⁵¹⁸ Tillner, Barbara. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 May 1980. p.13.

civil wars, London, Paris, New York and Los Angeles became the substitute.”⁵¹⁹

Even inside Saudi Arabia, “... thousands...” of Saudi Arabian women,

“... hid their Dior fashions under black Abayya, and the ‘liberated’ join[ed] their husbands to watch endless video films at private drinking parties until the next trip to freedom in Europe. [But] ... the saddest sight of all [was] elegant Saudi Arabian women travelling back to the Kingdom and donning their veils just before touch down.”⁵²⁰

When a woman ‘opposes’ any restriction inside Saudi Arabia, she becomes “... an outcast. Not only within the family, but the whole of society is against her.” Besides, stressed Barbara Tillner in the *Daily Telegraph*, “... other draconic laws and punishments, like stoning can be applied against her.”⁵²¹ Thus, in spite of Saudi Arabia's great development, “... from camel to Concorde...”, was the phrase coined by C.J. Syer in *The Times*, “... ancient traditions and customs have not changed.”⁵²²

Besides the negative portrayal in the British ‘quality’ papers of Saudi Arabia's Islamic punishment laws and the position of women, there was another more positive view which emerged during the film affair, and which praised and supported the application of Islamic codes in Saudi Arabia. It also argued that the Saudi Arabians are entitled to do things according to their own experience and culture and it focused on the positive position of Saudi Arabian women as part of the Islamic system. Caroline Lees, who

519 Andrews, John. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.11.

520 Ibid.

521 Tillner, Barbara. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 May 1980. p.13.

522 Syer, C.J. and Others. *The Times*. 30 April 1980. p.17.

used to work as an artist in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, wrote that during her "... four years of comparatively public work in the advertising field, at no time did anyone try to push me "into the shadows". From the Minister of Information down, I received all the politeness, help and courtesy I could wish for."⁵²³ As Syer and Others of *The Times* put it, "There are no stories here of little old ladies, living alone, too terrified to answer a knock on their front door for fear of being assaulted . " Therefore, the Saudi Arabians have "... strong grounds for retaining some of the severe forms of punishment [and] British courts could learn much from their Saudi colleagues."⁵²⁴

David Allen of the *Daily Telegraph* argued that even though the laws of Saudi Arabia may seem "... abhorrent,... the people of that land are entitled to do things in their own way. If we expect immigrants to respect our laws and customs ... we in our own turn must respect alien ways, even if the latter do not fit with our own philosophies."⁵²⁵ Almost a month later, J.P. Blades of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that compared with Western standards, "The laws of Saudi Arabia may appear to be punitive but nevertheless they are effective and the crime rate, which is minimal, must be the envy of the Western world."⁵²⁶ In a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph* under the title, 'Respect for Deep Wisdom of Islam', Louis Fitzgibbon criticised the attitude of what he called, "... this insular nonsense towards Islam...", and stressed that, "Islam contains deep wisdom and it has power." Fitzgibbon advised those who are "... ignorant of Islam ... to leave it alone."⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Lees, Caroline. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 April 1980. p.18.

⁵²⁴ Syer, C.J. and Others. *The Times*. 30 April 1980. p.17.

⁵²⁵ Allen, David. *Daily Telegraph*,. 14 April 1980. p.20.

⁵²⁶ Blades, J.P. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 May 1980. p.18.

⁵²⁷ Fitzgibbon, Louis. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 April 1980. p.18.

Sylvia Clayton, of the *Daily Telegraph*, made a similar point when she wrote that,

“What struck me was the fact that although nearly a fifth of the world's population is Moslem and its leaders, from the oil - rich Sheikhs to the Ayatollah Khomeni are increasingly prominent, understanding of Islam has advanced little since the days of the crusades”⁵²⁸

On balance, these elements added relatively little to the image of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic country and changed little of the image which had come to be established at the end of the Mecca crisis. What was of more significance, were the positive and negative views which members of the press and public openly expressed about Saudi Arabia, its Islamic laws and the position of women within that social and legal system, and the exploration which ensued of Saudi Arabia's relationship with Britain, in general, and its importance for Britain, in particular.

Saudi Arabia's decision to expel the British Ambassador and to refuse to appoint a new Saudi Arabian Ambassador to London, was accompanied by the “... implied threat of economic action.”⁵²⁹ *The Times* reported that one Saudi Arabian newspaper had called “... for an economic and propaganda war against Britain.”⁵³⁰ Nicholas Hirst of *The Times*, based on the Saudi Arabian Official Press Agency, reported that the Saudi Arabian cabinet was said, “... to have examined economic relations with Britain, especially the work of British firms in the kingdom.”⁵³¹ This, according to

528 Clayton, Sylvia. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 April 1980. p.15.

529 Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.21.

530 Reuters. *The Times*. 14 April 1980. p.5.

531 Hirst, Nicholas. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.21.

Roman Eisenstein of *The Times*, "... sent some shivers through the foreign exchange markets..." and caused the pound to be "... weaker against continental currencies because of fears that the Saudis might pull their funds out of London."⁵³² When Lord Carrington, the UK Foreign Secretary, sent a second message to Saudi Arabia's leaders,

"[He] stressed once again that the government attach[ed] great importance to [its] ... relations with Saudi Arabia and ... regret[ted] that they should have been damaged in this way by an incident outside our [the government's] control. Saudi Arabia and the UK ... have a close political and economic relationship from which we both benefit."⁵³³

Sir Ian Gilmour, the British Deputy Foreign Secretary, was quoted in the *Financial Times* as agreeing that, "The lowering of relations between Britain, and one of the most important countries in the Middle East, was a set back."⁵³⁴

Eldon Griffiths, MP, sought an emergency debate on the expulsion of Britain's Ambassador from Saudi Arabia. *The Times* stated that Griffiths believed, "It was important because relations with Saudi Arabia touched upon contracts worth some billions of pounds to Britain, upon the jobs of many tens of thousands ." Griffiths called attention to "... the large sums of Saudi assets, which if they were to be removed could affect the position of sterling."⁵³⁵

⁵³² Eisenstein, Roman. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.19.
⁵³³ Staff. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.10.
⁵³⁴ Hunt, John. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.9.
⁵³⁵ Staff. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.6.

Mr Cecil Parkinson, UK Minister of Trade, was reported by Kenneth Owen of *The Times* to "... greatly regret the damage done to British - Saudi Arabian political relations as a result of the film." Parkinson hoped that, "... the incident [would] not prejudice trading relationships built up over many years ... [as] ... Saudi Arabia is a very important trading partner for us."⁵³⁶

In terms of trade relations, John Hooper of *The Guardian* was unsure "... whether the move was a symbolic gesture ... or the first in a series of retaliatory measures against the British."⁵³⁷ Further, Rod Chapman of *The Guardian* maintained that the film affair, "... demonstrated once again Britain's vulnerability in international trading relations ..." at a time when the UK government intended to "... boost exports to the Middle East and to Saudi Arabia in particular."⁵³⁸ John Lawless of *The Times* pointed out the coming of the third Saudi Arabian development plan and estimated that any Saudi Arabian economic boycott against British firms would be an "...unexpected blow to [UK] companies already suffering the consequences of developments in Iran and the Soviet Union."⁵³⁹ The former referred to the result of the USA's insistence on a deadline for sanctions against Iran, and the latter was the result of the Soviet Union's displeasure over the strong Anglo-American stance on Afghanistan which materialised in awarding the first in a series of large contracts to the French.⁵⁴⁰ Anthony McDermott of the *Financial Times*, who also detailed some aspects of Saudi Arabian-British

⁵³⁶ Owen, Kenneth. *The Times*. 26 April 1980. p.17.

⁵³⁷ Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.1.

⁵³⁸ Chapman, Rod. *The Guardian*. 11 April 1980. p.12.

⁵³⁹ Lawless, John. *The Times*. 14 April 1980. p.19.

⁵⁴⁰ Lawless, John. *The Times*. 14 April 1980. p.19.

trade and economic relations, pointed out that Saudi Arabia was "... Britain's largest trading partner in the Middle East ."⁵⁴¹

Saudi Arabian - British relations in the defence area, were also important. Richard Johns of the *Financial Times* stated that, "The UK is involved in the Kingdom's defence programmes through a government to government contract ... worth well over £500m ... under the supervision of a team from the Ministry of Defence." In addition, a British firm was also responsible for Saudi Arabia's "... aircraft maintenance, technical back up, flying instructions, English tuition, civil engineering consultation and the provision of medical services." Similarly, "... Cable and Wireless, under a deal worth £200m, is engaged in design implementations, as well as installations, operations and the maintenance of a comprehensive communication system for the National Guard."⁵⁴²

David Spanier of *The Times* observed that the Saudi Arabian move was "... received in Whitehall with dismay."⁵⁴³ In his article, he wrote that, " It was feared that any move against British trade which might follow would have a substantial effect on UK trade... Saudi Arabia has shown every indication of becoming the first Middle East market to number among Britain's top 10 overseas customers." Spanier stressed Saudi Arabia's importance to the UK from both a strategic and ideological perspective and he explained that, "The substantial increases in trade are not the only important factor, for Saudi Arabia has been spending thousands of millions

⁵⁴¹ McDermott, Anthony. *Financial Times*. 11 April 1980. p.3.

⁵⁴² Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 25 April 1980. p.1. See also McDermott, Anthony. *Financial Times*. 11 April 1980. p.3.

⁵⁴³ Spanier, David. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.1.

of its petro dollars to promote the cause of Islam and defeat the spread of communism in other developing countries.”⁵⁴⁴

The British newspapers also reported the broadly similar responses of a number of other Western countries. Robert Schuil of *The Times* reported that, “Considerable pressure ha[d] been brought on the Netherlands not to go ahead with ... broadcast [ing] the film.”⁵⁴⁵ Mr Hans Wiegel, the Dutch Deputy Prime Minister, was reported in the same article to have said that if the decision was his he would not broadcast the film. Further, when Nellie Smith Krocs, the Dutch Transport Secretary was in Saudi Arabia as part of a tour to the Gulf states, “She gave her pledge that the Dutch government would do all in its power to stop broadcasting the film.”⁵⁴⁶ The *Daily Telegraph* further commented that, “The Saudi government ha[d] ... a visiting Dutch Minister available for some ‘arm twisting’.”⁵⁴⁷ Dutch companies with interests in Saudi Arabia were also reported to have “... appealed to the network to take those interests into consideration before making a decision on whether to show the film.”⁵⁴⁸

In Australia, the Independent Television Network, Channel 7, was asked by the Australian Government “... not to screen the film, [because] ... the network was told that showing it would damage Australia's relation with Saudi Arabia as it was ‘grossly offensive’ ... [to Saudi Arabia].”⁵⁴⁹ Likewise, in West Germany, the television network had “... declined contracts to show the programme based solely on grounds of quality.”⁵⁵⁰

544 Spanier, David. *The Times*. 24 April 1980. p.1.
 545 Schuil, Robert. *The Times*. 16 April 1980. p.7.
 546 Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 April 1980. p.21.
 547 Ibid.
 548 Schuil, Robert. *The Times*. 16 April 1980. p.7.
 549 AP (News agency). *The Times*. 16 April 1980. p.7.
 550 Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 29 April 1980. p.1.

Moreover, a Swedish company, which bought the rights to the programme to prevent it from being shown on Swedish screens, was described by *The Guardian* newspaper as "... bowing to the pressure and avoiding Saudi sanctions."⁵⁵¹

David Cross of *The Times* stated that, "After Britain and Holland, it is now the turn of the US to be approached by the Saudi government." According to Cross, the American's State Department's spokesman in Washington had said that, "The administration ha[s] been in contact with the Saudis and [is] 'listening to their concern' about plans to show the film on the US media."⁵⁵² According to Mcilroy of the *Daily Telegraph*, the Saudi Arabian government was reported to have prepared a statement demanding that the film be banned from American television. In addition he added that, "The State Department officials [who] have been keeping an official low profile on the subject ...", admitted that they too were "... apprehensive about the damage a showing of the film might cause to relations with Saudi Arabia, a principal Middle East ally and oil source."⁵⁵³

4.1.4. CONCLUSION

In short, if the oil crisis of 1973 sped the emergence of Saudi Arabia from a shadowy country into a position of economic world importance and regional leadership, and the Mecca Crisis of 1979 highlighted Saudi Arabia's place and importance amongst Arab and Islamic countries and communities, then the 'Death of a Princess' film affair reflected the place and importance of Saudi Arabia within Western countries in general, and the UK in

⁵⁵¹ Staff. *The Guardian*. 24 April 1980. p.12.

⁵⁵² Cross, David. *The Times*. 25 April 1980. p.8.

⁵⁵³ Mcilroy, A.J. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 April 1980. p.5.

particular. This was no longer just based on Saudi Arabia's oil power, its pro-Western policies, and its place in the Islamic and the Arab world, but was now also based on Saudi Arabia's economic power, which resulted from its high income and revenue which had accumulated since the oil embargo of 1973-1974. Although, in the end, Saudi diplomatic pressure and veiled threats of economic retaliation did not succeed in preventing the film from being shown either in Britain, Europe or the USA, the episode did result in an increased perception of Saudi Arabia's importance to Western countries.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GULF CRISIS

'THE GULF CRISIS' 1

5.1 PRELUDE: 5 JULY 1990 - 1 AUGUST 1990, THE PERIOD PRIOR TO IRAQ'S INVASION OF KUWAIT, THE IRAQI THREAT TO SAUDI ARABIA , THE OPEC CONFERENCE OF JULY 26

The four weeks before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait witnessed three major events: (1) President Saddam Hussain's verbal attack on the Gulf states; (2) Iraq's military threat against Kuwait; and, (3) OPEC's half-yearly conference, which was held on 26 July, 1990.

It is the OPEC conference, however, which is the central event of the four weeks period because Iraq's verbal assaults and military threats were designed, it seems now, to influence the OPEC conference's decisions about prices and oil production. It appears that Iraq's increasingly desperate need for extra revenue to pay for the costs of its war with Iran, which it could of course only do through a major increase in the price of its oil exports but which in turn depended on the support of OPEC, was the mainspring for its actions prior to the OPEC conference. This once again put Saudi Arabia in the, by now familiar position, of being crucial for the economies of oil-using nations and for the world economy in general. But, the fact that a heavily armed Iraq, under a leader proven to be willing to resort to war, was actually on the borders of Saudi Arabia, as well as on the borders of Kuwait, one of the largest oil producers in OPEC and in general a main supporter of the moderate oil policy championed by Saudi Arabia, introduced major new elements into the British press' attempts to understand and to portray Saudi Arabia to their readers. For the first time, Saudi Arabia as a country was

under direct military threat, whereas before, one of the central elements of the image of Saudi Arabia was that it was remote from such dangers. This fact led to both an extensive and a highly analytical coverage which re-examined some of the previous themes in new lights and explored aspects hitherto hardly touched upon. This resulted in a major extension and revision of the image of Saudi Arabia.

The whole of the Gulf Crisis was also a testing time for Saudi Arabia in every way, as it was forced to make truly fateful choices and unambiguous, indeed irreversible, decisions, of the very type which it had largely been able to avoid making through its characteristic combination of a preference for a cautious and non-confrontational foreign policy and its remoteness from immediate threats itself. The Press, therefore, also had a special opportunity to observe, seek to understand and then to portray an image of Saudi Arabia that was not based in terms of its potential to respond to a major crisis, but was based on actual events. The press coverage of this period is, therefore, especially significant for consolidating the image of Saudi Arabia during the concluding period of this study.

As we mentioned earlier, the Iranian revolution of 1979 was one of the main events which had a significant influence on the Gulf region at least. One of the main aims of the new religious regime in Tehran was to export revolutionary ideas to Islamic countries which contained minority or majority Shi'ite followers ruled by Sunni regimes in countries like Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. These countries were all experiencing strains among their Shi'ite communities. The emergence of Iran as an Islamic country alone posed a challenge to Saudi Arabia, not only due to differences between the two Islamic branches of the two countries, Sunni

and Shi'ite, but also because, "Until the Ayatollah's rise to undisputed power, Saudi Arabia constituted the only Islamic theocracy in the world."⁵⁵⁴ Further, the Saudi Arabians did not feel comfortable and secure with their Shi'ite minority who made up an important part of the labour force in the petroleum industry in the Eastern province where Saudi Arabian oil fields were said to lie as long as , "...Ayatollah Khomeni still dominates Iran."⁵⁵⁵

In fact, Richard Johns of the *Financial Times*, reported that even before Ayatollah Khomeni came to power, "Taped religious discourse, with strong political overtones ... of Ayatollah Khomeni ... had been circulating in the Eastern province for a year."⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, a few months after the arrival of Khomeni to Iran, the Shi'ite staged a march with some members of the march carrying portraits of Ayatollah Khomeni. When the march ended in a clash with the Saudi Arabian security forces, "... 13 lives were lost."⁵⁵⁷

Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times* wrote that the Gulf states in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, because they had supported Iraq during the eight-year war which Iraq "... so rashly began - against Iran..."⁵⁵⁸, "... fear[ed] the spread of Iranian revolutionary ideas to their own Shia Moslem communities."⁵⁵⁹ The war ended with a cease-fire in 1988. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait's financial support provided Iraq with, "... some 35 billion in interest free-loan to pursue the war."⁵⁶⁰ To show the

⁵⁵⁴ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 22 November 1979. p.24.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Johns, Richard. *Financial Times*. 4 December 1979. p.44.

⁵⁵⁷ Buchan, James and Close, John. *Financial Times*. 7 December 1979. p.22.

⁵⁵⁸ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 26 July 1990. p.18.

⁵⁵⁹ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 11 July 1990. p.4.

⁵⁶⁰ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 20 July 1990. .p.6. See also 19 July. p.1 and 26 July. p.18.

importance of such support, *The Times* stated that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait's financial support had permitted Iraq to '...emerge from the war in formidable shape....'⁵⁶¹

However, the eight year war left Iraq with a severely damaged economy. In an attempt to find an economic solution, Baghdad held an Arab Summit Conference between 28 to 30 May, 1990. The Iraqis failed to gain any further financial support from the Gulf States in particular. Still worse, a few months later, there was a rapid decline in the price of oil on which Iraq depended almost exclusively for foreign exchange. This led to a dramatic drop in Iraq's projected resources. There were various reasons for the drop in price and certainly a lack of production discipline within OPEC was a contributing factor. "Most OPEC members were guilty of this, including Iraq itself."⁵⁶² In fact, even Saudi Arabia, "...which normally abide[d] strictly to agreed out-put levels, had turned on its taps in order to force wayward members to abide by a new accord."⁵⁶³ Finally, Saddam Hussain chose a military solution and attacked Kuwait and the U.A.E. who were respectively, the "...leading quota breaker..."⁵⁶⁴, and, "...the main quota violator."⁵⁶⁵

In a speech which marked the 22nd anniversary of the coup d'etat that brought the Ba'ath party to power, President Hussain launched an unprecedented verbal attack on his neighbours in the Gulf when he ironically, "...praised Iran for responding to his call for a peace treaty ...[and] ... criticised the Arab nations for not recognising Iraq's achievement

⁵⁶¹ Staff. *The Times*. 27 July 1990. p.13.

⁵⁶² Strategic survey. 1990-1991. IISS. 1991. p.55.

⁵⁶³ Staff. *The Times*. 10 July 1990. p.1.

⁵⁶⁴ Thomas, David and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 14/15 July 1990. p.24.

⁵⁶⁵ Barrow, Martin. *The Times*. 24 July 1990. p.25.1.

in the Gulf war.” The Iraqi president was reported by Victor Mallet of *The Financial Times* to have said that, “The policies of some Arab rulers are American ... They are inspired by America to undermine Arab interests and security”⁵⁶⁶ Hazhir Teimourian of *The Times* reported how Saddam Hussain had accused Kuwait, and the U.A.E. in particular, of “... stabbing Iraq in the back... [instead of] ... appreciating its sacrifices in the war with Iran... Iraq [had]... “sacrifice[d]” its sons to keep their (some Gulf rulers’) banks full with more money than they [had] ever had.”⁵⁶⁷ The speech carried a clear threat in that, “If words failed to protect Iraqis, something with effect must be done to return things to their natural course and to return usurped rights to their owners.” Saddam Hussein had concluded that, “Iraq [would] not forget the maxim that cutting necks [was] better than cutting the means of living. Oh God Almighty, be witness that we have warned them.”⁵⁶⁸

Saddam Hussain’s speech was delivered formally in a report submitted to the Arab League by the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Mr Tariq Aziz, in which he indicated, among other complaints, that Kuwait and the U.A.E., “... had deliberately undermined the Iraqi economy by producing more oil than was allowed by their OPEC quotas and then by depressing prices, and that Kuwait had violated Iraq’s border and had stolen oil worth 2.5 billion.”⁵⁶⁹ Finally, the Iraqi threat took a serious course on 24 July, 1990, when 30,000 Iraqi troops were ordered to move to the Iraq-Kuwait border.⁵⁷⁰ The British press offered various interpretations of Iraqi’s action with clear regard to Saudi Arabia.

⁵⁶⁶ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 18 July 1990. p.4.

⁵⁶⁷ Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 18 July 1990. p.10.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 19 July 1990. p.11.

⁵⁷⁰ Fletcher, Martin and Walker, Christopher. *The Times*. 25 July 1990. p.1.

To Anne Segall and Maurice Weaver of the *Daily Telegraph*, the Iraqi actions were,

“... brutally straightforward. Hussain ran up a \$70 billion foreign debt during the bloody eight-year war with Iran. His armed forces need rebuilding and the country’s defence budget ... is some \$15 billion. In 1988, debt servicing is believed to have soaked up \$5-7 billion from the Iraqi exchequers. He is under immense pressure from creditors and needs more money fast.”⁵⁷¹

Hazhir Teimourian of *The Times* assumed that Iraq, “... would use the threat or the actuality of military intervention against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to avoid the repayment of his estimated war debt of \$45 billion to the two countries.”⁵⁷² By Iraq’s actions, “... Saddam [had] now told those governments [that] the debts [would] never be paid.”⁵⁷³

On 25 July, 1990, *The Times* stated that, “Iraq, which covets Kuwait’s rich oil reserves and wants better access to the Gulf, has tried to enforce its claims to large tracts of the border ... Baghdad has demanded a lease on Bubian Island in the Gulf, which the Kuwaitis fear would presage further territorial claims.”⁵⁷⁴

Based on, “... Arab and Western diplomats ...”, Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times*, argued that Saddam Hussain was “... using an adventurist foreign policy to distract the attention of the Iraqi people from their domestic, economic and political misery.”⁵⁷⁵ He explained that Iraq was

⁵⁷¹ Segall, Anne and Weaver, Maurice. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.13.

⁵⁷² Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 19 July 1990. p.11.

⁵⁷³ Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 18 July 1990. p.10.

⁵⁷⁴ Unidentified. *The Times*. 25 July 1990. p.13.

⁵⁷⁵ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 26 July 1990. p.18.

“... seeking a dominant role in OPEC by asserting its prominence in the Gulf.”⁵⁷⁶

Moreover, Patrick Bishop of the *Daily Telegraph* reasoned that, “The Iraqi aggressive outburst [was] part of a campaign to raise oil prices in order to increase Iraqi oil revenue...”⁵⁷⁷, which was one of the major aims of Saddam Hussain’s attack against the Gulf states. Anne Segall and Maurice Weaver of the *Daily Telegraph* believed that the Iraqi President’s attacks “... indicate[d] the ruthless nature of the man who now seem[ed] to be an adamant influence in the region”.⁵⁷⁸

The British newspapers emphasised that the Iraqi public threat against Kuwait and the U.A.E., and the implicit threat against the Gulf states, posed a critical dilemma for Saudi Arabia. First of all, Saudi Arabia, as a member of the Gulf Co-operation Council, was worried that the Iraqi threat, “... might plunge the Gulf Arabs, all of who are treaty-bound ... in the GCC, into war.”⁵⁷⁹ For the States in the Gulf in general, and Kuwait in particular, had “... traditionally [always] been ... protégés of the Saudis.”⁵⁸⁰

Secondly, Saudi Arabia was quoted by the *Financial Times* as being worried that Iraq’s threat was more general and indicated an ambition to dominate the Gulf States. Indeed, “President Saddam Hussein’s bellicose rhetoric has revived the fears of his Gulf neighbours that he will turn his

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Ibid..

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Bishop, Patrick. *Daily Telegraph*. 20 July 1990. p.10.

578

Segall, Anne, and Weaver, Maurice. *Daily Telegraph*., 28 July 1990. p.13.

579

Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 18 July 1990. p.10.

580

Keegan, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 July 1990. p.17.

politics [and] ambitions, backed by the Arab world's largest army, away from Iran and Israel towards softer targets to the South."⁵⁸¹

Tony Walker of the *Financial Times* noted that, "Since the end of the war with Iran, Iraq [had] emerged as the strongest Arab militant defender of Arab interests and the policeman of OPEC."⁵⁸² Iraq's attitude against the Gulf states was seen by Patrick Bishop of the *Daily Telegraph* as "... part of a campaign to raise oil prices in order to relieve the chronic post-Gulf war debt ... and to suit the economic need of the Iraqi post-war era."⁵⁸³ Obviously, such an Iraqi aim could have had a significant negative effect on the oil market which was the main, if not the only, source of income for the Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia which had always been an advocate of a moderate oil policy in order to maintain oil as a main energy resource in a competitive oil market which was described by Gordon Martin et al of the *Daily Telegraph* as, "... finely balanced, because a big increase could push western economies into recession and that would destroy demand."⁵⁸⁴

While Iraqi troops were moving along Kuwait's border, OPEC's half-yearly conference took place between 25-26 July, 1990, in Geneva and Iraq, supported by other countries, led a campaign to increase oil prices. This particular OPEC conference was a unique one, as it was the first conference which was held while some of its members were directly threatened by another member of the organisation. Steve Butler and Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times* described the conference as, "... the first test of whether Iraq [could] achieve its aims by threatening." They stated that

⁵⁸¹ Staff. *Financial Times*. 23 July 1990. p.14.

⁵⁸² Walker, Tony. *Financial Times*. 2 August 1990. p.3.

⁵⁸³ Bishop, Patrick. *Daily Telegraph*. 20 July 1990. p.10.

⁵⁸⁴ Martin, Gordon, Petty, John and Gordon, Hugo. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.1.

the ministers attending would "... have to decide whether to keep, or increase the current \$18 a barrel reference price for a basket of OPEC crudes."⁵⁸⁵ *The Times* presumed that the Arab oil ministers, "... must be praying that Iraq's belligerent threat to 'break necks' ... [was] no more than heavy-fisted economic blackmail."⁵⁸⁶ At that stage, it was still unclear whether it was a serious threat or not but as John Hooper of *The Guardian* wrote, "The delegates from OPEC's 13 member states knew that the decision, ... could make the difference between peace and war in the Gulf."⁵⁸⁷

Steve Butler and Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times* suggested that Iraq's military threat would "... raise a broader question: [will] the balance of power within OPEC shift fundamentally in favour of the price hawks, leading to a period of higher oil prices?"⁵⁸⁸ The following day, Victor Mallet wrote in the *Financial Times* that, "The question is not so much whether oil will keep flowing, the Gulf war showed that it will continue to do in almost any circumstances. With the ungrateful Mr Saddam enforcing OPEC quotas, aiming for oil at \$25 and then \$30 a barrel, and starting to impose his will on the Gulf producer, the question is at what price?"⁵⁸⁹

The eventual outcome of the conference was a rise of \$3 a barrel in the price of oil which was far short of what Iraq had wanted, but was also somewhat unexpected by the rest of the world, especially the British 'quality' Press which had generally seemed to rely on Saudi Arabia to block any price increases.

⁵⁸⁵ Butler, Steven and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 25 July 1990. p.30.

⁵⁸⁶ Unidentified. *The Times*. 25 July 1990. p.13.

⁵⁸⁷ Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 25 July 1990. p.8.

⁵⁸⁸ Butler, Steven and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 25 July 1990. p.30, see also 28/29 July. p.1.

⁵⁸⁹ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 26 July 1990. p.18.

Before the OPEC conference, the British newspapers, based on their perception and image of Saudi Arabia's moderate oil policy, banked on Saudi Arabia to restrain the 'hawkish' OPEC members like Iraq and Iran. For example, the *Financial Times* reported that Saudi Arabia, the biggest exporter, believed that average prices could be restored on an OPEC target of \$18 a barrel, against Iraq calling for \$25.⁵⁹⁰ Gordon Martin et al, of the *Daily Telegraph*, presumed that Saudi Arabia would, "... swing its support behind a moderate increase on oil prices."⁵⁹¹ Likewise, John Hooper of *The Guardian* emphasised that, "In the initial round of position-taking, Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf States [had] expressed reluctance to agree on a price above \$20 a barrel."⁵⁹² Similarly, when Ali Akber Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Iranian President, called for OPEC to push for higher oil prices, Steven Butler of the *Financial Times* wrote that, "A number of moderate OPEC members, including Saudi Arabia, ... are thought unlikely to wish to see oil prices rise significantly above ... \$18-20 a barrel."⁵⁹³ Hazhir Teimourian of *The Times* explained that, unlike Iraq and its supporters, who wanted prices "... to rise through immediate action by the Cartel", Saudi Arabia, wanted prices "... to rise naturally and more slowly."⁵⁹⁴

Obviously, when the conference ended and the Saudi Arabian oil Minister, Hisham Nazer, announced that OPEC had adopted an agreement "... to raise its minimum reference price by three dollars, to \$21 a barrel

⁵⁹⁰ Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 13 July 1990. p.13.

⁵⁹¹ Martin, Gordon, Petty, John and Gordon, Hugo. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.1.

⁵⁹² Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 26 July 1990. p.1.

⁵⁹³ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 24 July 1990. p.30.

⁵⁹⁴ Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 26 July 1990. p.23.

...”⁵⁹⁵, the moderate image of Saudi Arabia’s oil policy took a knock, and some of British journalists accused Saudi Arabia of following a hard line. Others, for example Steven Butler and Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times*, took another view and pointed out that the outcome of the conference was a defeat for Iraq’s “... efforts to lift oil prices to \$25 a barrel.” The two journalists mentioned that Iraq now “... appeared certain to win a modest increase in the Cartel’s benchmark price.”⁵⁹⁶

Three days later in the same paper, Steven Butler, commenting on the increase in oil prices agreed at OPEC meeting, stated that,

“...[this] could mark a historic turning point for OPEC. For the past four years, OPEC has kept oil prices low in a successful effort to regain some market share that it lost in the early 1980s. This was the result of a coalition of interests between the most powerful Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. Most analysts believe this is not a temporary arrangement.”⁵⁹⁷

John Hooper and Ben Laurence of *The Guardian* also implied that Saudi Arabia had co-operated with Iraq and added that a new sub-committee to monitor output of OPEC production on a monthly basis was “. hammered out mainly between Iraq and OPEC’s largest producer, Saudi Arabia.”⁵⁹⁸ Other journalists, such as Anne Segall and Maurice Weaver of the *Daily Telegraph*, saw Saudi Arabia’s support for Iraq as being highly significant. “The fact that the Saudis, a traditional moderating influence among OPEC’s hawks, [had] gone along with the Iraqi price campaign [was] seen as a significant development in a grouping which [was] not always so

⁵⁹⁵ McGregor, Alan and Fletcher, Martin. *The Times*. 28 July 1990. p.1.

⁵⁹⁶ Butler, Steven and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 27 July 1990. p.1.

⁵⁹⁷ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 30 July 1990. p.3.

⁵⁹⁸ Hooper, John and Laurence, Ben. *The Guardian*. 28 July 1990. p.1.

cohesive."⁵⁹⁹ The *Daily Telegraph* warned, and reminded the oil producers in an article entitled, 'Oil Futures', that,

"The 1973 and 1979 oil price increase ... resulted in a sharp contraction in the market for oil, which in turn caused the long-term erosion of prices. At the cost of massive disruption in world economy, it's debatable whether the oil shock achieved any more for the producers, over time, than would a policy of more gradual increases."⁶⁰⁰

Thus, the British newspapers' perception of Saudi Arabia as a country which stood for a moderate oil policy was modified as a result of the OPEC conference's decision to increase oil prices, and Saudi Arabia's decision to change its stand by agreeing to let the price rise to \$21. But in fact, even before the OPEC conference, Saudi Arabia had been struggling to correct, or increase, the oil price.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia had also put pressure on the Gulf states which had broken the OPEC oil quota and was also reported to have been opposed to any other countries' attempts to produce oil above their OPEC quota. When Venezuela's Senor Colestino Armas offered to place part of his country's oil resources at the disposal of the consumer countries, Saudi Arabia was reported, "... to have tried to block it."⁶⁰¹ Also, the *Financial Times* wrote that when oil prices jumped by \$1 a barrel, after the U.A.E. had agreed to cut its oil production, Mr Hisham Nazer, the Saudi Oil Minister, said that an agreement had been reached between King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Sheikh Zaid, the U.A.E. president.⁶⁰² Roland Gribben of the *Daily Telegraph* reported that, "Sheikh Zayed, the U.A.E. President,

⁵⁹⁹ Segall, Anne and Weaver, Maurice. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.13.

⁶⁰⁰ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.12.

⁶⁰¹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 July 1990. p.10.

⁶⁰² Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 13 July 1990. p.13.

[was] said to have telephoned King Fahd of Saudi to give an undertaking that the U.A.E. would stick to its quota level."⁶⁰³ Likewise, Kuwait, another leading quota breaker, agreed to cut its oil output to its quota of 1.5 million barrels per day which was reported to be partly the result of pressure from Saudi Arabia, its powerful neighbour.⁶⁰⁴

Saudi Arabia's role in reducing output as a step towards increasing prices was also noted. John Hooper of *The Guardian* maintained that, "[Even] before President Saddam's speech, Gulf Arab producers meeting in Jeddah agreed that Kuwait and the U.A.E. should cut their output."⁶⁰⁵ Hazhir Teimourian of *The Times* wrote that Kuwait and the U.A.E. had "... declared that they would cut their oil exports drastically to bring them in line with quotas allocated to members by OPEC."⁶⁰⁶ Martin Barrow of *The Times* described the meeting as, "A significant breakthrough."⁶⁰⁷ Saudi Arabia, which had stuck to its OPEC quotas as an example of encouragement, was reported by Thomas and Mallet of the *Financial Times*, to be "... ready to see its share of OPEC output temporarily decline."⁶⁰⁸

However, such Saudi Arabian moves at the oil front were also seen as a reflection of Saudi Arabia's traditional policy of acting as a mediator, seeking to mediate between Iraq and Kuwait and to diffuse tensions in the area. According to Deborah Pugh and Simon Tisdall of *The Guardian*, Saudi Arabia was expected, "... to write off the billions of dollars interest-free credit made available to Iraq during the Gulf War in return for a down-

⁶⁰³ Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 14 July 1990. p.19.

⁶⁰⁴ Thomas, David and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 14/15 July 1990. p.24.

⁶⁰⁵ Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 25 July 1990. p.8.

⁶⁰⁶ Teimourian, Hazhir. *The Times*. 19 July 1990. p.11.

⁶⁰⁷ Barrow, Martin. *The Times*. 24 July 1990. p.25.

⁶⁰⁸ Thomas, David and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 14/15 July 1990. p.24.

grading of tensions.”⁶⁰⁹ The *Daily Telegraph* affirmed that Saudi Arabia, which was willing, “...to be flexible over the large share of Iraq’s war debt owing to them, [had] set a precedent for other creditors.”⁶¹⁰ Further, based on “... diplomats in the Middle East ...”, John Hooper of *The Guardian* was convinced that, “Saudi Arabia had offered to help finance Iraq’s economic reconstruction in an effort to ‘buy’ peace in the Gulf.”⁶¹¹

Even though Saudi Arabia’s role during and after the OPEC conference shed some doubt over the previous image of Saudi Arabia’s moderate oil policy, nevertheless, Saudi Arabia’s actions presented a picture of Saudi Arabia as a rational and sensible country which realised its strengths as well as its weaknesses and limitations. As Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times* wrote, Saudi Arabia did not want to provoke Iraq and realised that even with its five allies put together they had “... no credible military deterrent of their own to deploy against Iraq”. Thus, Saudi Arabia and its allies were “... left with few options. They [could] appeal to Mr Saddam’s sense of reason and invoke the feeble spirit of Arab unity, but they would have confidence in neither; they [could] appease him and fund his suggested “marshall plan” for Iraq, or they [could] call in the Americans.”⁶¹² But, according to Steven Butler and Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times*, “... to call for US assistance would be to play into Mr Saddam’s hands. The GCC states [were] thus left with few options other than diplomacy and appeasement...”⁶¹³, such as the financial stand taken by Saudi Arabia at the OPEC conference.

⁶⁰⁹ Pugh, Deborah and Tisdall, Simon. *The Guardian*. 24 July 1990. p.1.

⁶¹⁰ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 28 July 1990. p.12.

⁶¹¹ Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 26 July 1990. p.1.

⁶¹² Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 26 July 1990. p.18.

⁶¹³ Butler, Steven and Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 25 July 1990. p.30.

Saudi Arabia was therefore portrayed in the British 'quality' press as a country which wanted to keep its region stable and secure. It felt responsible towards the smaller Gulf states, not only for religious and political reasons, but also to ensure that they followed a moderate oil policy within OPEC. Saudi Arabia was also shown to be a country which wanted to keep the status quo in the region because any change could affect the whole, including Saudi Arabia. Even though Saudi Arabia could depend on American assistance, Saudi Arabia preferred not to do so because it was worried that an American presence could bring more pressure from nationalist and Islamic sources. The overall picture of Saudi Arabia that emerged in the British 'quality' press was one with the emphasis on the rational and reasonable features of a regional power which sought to play a protecting role for countries, particularly those within its sphere of influence, against the rise of a new and potentially oppressive power. Saudi Arabia was also seen to fill the role of a moderator, a diffuser of tensions, and a country willing to pay a high price for peace.

THE 'GULF CRISIS' 2

5.1.1. THE CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH: 2 AUGUST 1990 - 30 AUGUST 1990

On the 2nd of August, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait after a delegation from the two countries had failed to reach agreement one day earlier in a meeting arranged by King Fahd, of Saudi Arabia and President Hosni Mubarrak, of Egypt, which was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

A few hours after the invasion, the United Nations' Secretary Council passed Resolution 660 which condemned Iraq's invasion. At the same time, the United States and the UK enforced sanctions against Iraq and Kuwait, blocked their reserve accounts and initiated embargos against Iraq and Kuwait's oil exports. Further, President Bush warned Iraq against further action and promised to support Saudi Arabia in the case of an Iraqi threat.

When the United Nations passed Resolution 661, which imposed a comprehensive economic embargo on Iraq, pressure increased on Saudi Arabia to apply the United Nations' Resolution. Saudi Arabia, which gave the Emir of Kuwait and most Kuwaiti refugees permission to enter Saudi Arabia, did not want to provoke Iraq further by applying United Nations' sanctions and by closing the vital Iraqi oil pipelines which crossed Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea.⁶¹⁴ Instead, Saudi Arabia called for a summit

⁶¹⁴ Barber, Lionel. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.1. See also O'Dwyer-Russell, Simon. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.12. See also Almond, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.15. See also

meeting between Iraqi and Kuwaiti leaders to diffuse the crisis, but the attempt failed because Kuwait refused to accept all Iraq's demands.⁶¹⁵ However, in an attempt to prevent Saudi Arabia from supporting the United Nations and United States' sanctions, or maybe as a plan to threaten or invade Saudi Arabia, Iraq deployed troops on Saudi Arabia's border and was reported in the press to have sent an aeroplane to Yemen.⁶¹⁶

Saudi Arabia, which had earlier been under continued pressure from the United States, received a visit from the United States Secretary of Defence, Mr Dick Cheney, and other key American officials, who took with them the most up-to-date satellite photographs which showed the masses of Iraqi troops close to Saudi Arabia's border.

At this stage, Gerald Butt of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that Saudi Arabia found itself "... caught between fear of an Iraqi attack on them and pressure from Washington to back plans for economic and military measures against Iraq."⁶¹⁷ After intense hesitation, Saudi Arabia made a historic decision, at least within the region, and decided to allow the United States to send troops into the country to protect Saudi Arabia and stand against Iraq. This decision was probably one of the most difficult and painful decisions in the history of Saudi Arabia, and certainly, it was the most significant decision up until that point in time in the reign of King Fahd.

⁶¹⁵ Owen, David. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.10.
 Evans, Kathy. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.2. See also
 Unidentified. *The Guardian*. 4 August 1990. p.7.

⁶¹⁶ La Guardia, Anton. *Daily Telegraph*. 15 August 1990. p.9. See also
 Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 10 August 1990. p.2.
 Fletcher, Martin. *The Times*. 6 August 1990. p.1.

⁶¹⁷ Butt, Gerald. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

According to Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times*,

“A quiet revolution is under way in Saudi Arabia. After years of shedding its puritanical Islamic traditions from external influence the oil-rich kingdom is having to submit to the harsh and unfamiliar gaze of the outside world. Its rulers, accustomed to wielding immense influence discreetly, are having to adopt to a new order in the region. Saudis and foreigners alike are convinced that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the arrival of thousands of American troops in this most conservative of countries mark a significant turning point in Saudi history.”⁶¹⁸

Saudi Arabia's role during the Gulf crisis was explained comprehensively in the British 'quality' press. The problems or dilemmas which the crisis was perceived to pose to Saudi Arabia were explained and discussed by journalists, for example, why Saudi Arabia should or should not support the United Nations, and why Saudi Arabia should or should not accept American troops on her soil. These discussions evoked existing images and perceptions of Saudi Arabia, for readers of the British newspapers and introduced many new, and sometimes rather different images, which were not always consistent with the image of Saudi Arabia that had previously existed. Consequently, it appears that Saudi Arabia's image underwent a change during the four week period as the British newspapers reported the unfolding events and compared Saudi Arabia's role in this crisis to what they had expected Saudi Arabia to do, and what it was in the past.

Indeed, several new images of Saudi Arabia, which had not been present in the previous periods or crises, emerged. One was that of the

⁶¹⁸ Mallet, Victor. *Financial Times*. 16 August 1990. p.1.

vulnerability of Saudi Arabia to external aggression. British newspapers' perceptions of Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself also brought about for the first time comments, which in turn led to the formation of an image of Saudi Arabia's military power.

The second dimension to be added to the image of Saudi Arabia which emerged, concerned Saudi Arabia's conduct of its foreign policy and diplomacy in respect of the involvement of an external power in the context of Middle Eastern sensitivities.

The third dimension of Saudi Arabia's image which emerged concerned the workings and effectiveness of Saudi Arabia's political system. The newspapers sought to describe and explain what they took to be Saudi Arabia's political system and expressed their attitudes to such a system. Finally, other issues such as oil, United States - Saudi Arabian relations and Islamic issues were touched on again and continued to add to the already established image of Saudi Arabia in these respects.

5.1.2 SAUDI ARABIA AS AN OIL POWER

From the early days of the crisis, the British newspapers argued that the conquest of Kuwait posed a significant danger to Saudi Arabia's security, which was vital for the continuity of a moderate oil policy. By controlling Kuwait's oil reserves, Iraq would be capable of influencing the oil market in the opposite direction to that of Saudi Arabia's policy. Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Times* believed that, "The display of Iraqi ruthlessness will intensify the sense of insecurity felt by the military weak Government in Saudi

Arabia.”⁶¹⁹ Two days earlier, Michael Evans, also of *The Times*, had written that Iraq’s war plan “... must include psychological, if not physical, domination of Saudi Arabia.”⁶²⁰ Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* argued, that, “The takeover of Kuwait [was] a body blow to the stability of the other Feudal regimes in the Gulf. If a pro-Iraq ‘revolution’ can be staged in Kuwait, why not also by ambitious cliques eager to dislodge bloated monarchies like that of Saudi Arabia.”⁶²¹

Moreover, the Kuwait crisis threatened Saudi Arabia’s oil market which stood for a steady flow of oil at a moderate price. Saudi Arabia’s Oil Minister, Mr Hisham Nazer, was reported by Stephen Butler of the *Financial Times* as stating that, “Soaring oil prices will damage the world economy and the future market for oil.”⁶²² Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Times* was concerned that, “With Kuwait under Baghdad’s thumb, the Iraqi government will be in a strong position to coerce the other Arab oil producers to follow its lead on pricing decision, with potentially deleterious consequences for the global economy.”⁶²³ Certainly, the invasion of Kuwait threatened Saudi Arabia’s position as the leader of the oil market. As Andrew Gowers of the *Financial Times* put it, Iraq’s control of Kuwait’s oil, put together with Iraq’s military power, was “... a combination capable of calling the shots on oil policy for the entire Gulf, repository of 65 per cent of the world’s oil reserve.”⁶²⁴

619 Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Times*. 6 August 1990. p.10.

620 Evans, Michael. *The Times*. 4 August 1990. p.7.

621 Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 August 1990. p.16.

622 Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 20 August 1990. p.1.

623 Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *The Times*. 6 August 1990. p.10.

624 Gowers, Andrew. *Financial Times*. 3 August 1990. p.14.

Iraq had already used its military power to influence the Gulf States' oil policy during the last months of the OPEC conference and had, as Roland Gribben of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote, "... effectively moved into the OPEC driving seat - taking over leadership of the 13-National Cartel from Saudi Arabia."⁶²⁵ Thus, Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* warned that as a result of Iraq's conquest of Kuwait, " Saudi oil policy would be much more subject to Saddam's wishes."⁶²⁶

But why was Saudi Arabia threatened by an Iraqi oil policy which would increase Saudi Arabia's oil revenue more than Iraq's? The British newspapers underlined the fact that Saudi Arabia stood for a steady flow of oil at prices that were not exorbitant, and that it would not be any happier with an unreasonable increase. Unlike other producer countries, Saudi Arabia's interests lie in a long-term policy, owing to its huge proven oil reserves which it claimed would still run even when the world's other oil reserves ran out. But, higher oil prices could force the consumer countries to search for alternative options: they might look for other energy sources or they might reduce their oil consumption. Either of these options could damage Saudi Arabia's interests in the long-term oil market. Thus, post-war Iraq's pressure for higher oil prices or a reduction in oil production could threaten Saudi Arabia. Along these lines, Steven Butler of the *Financial Times* predicted that, "Extended high prices, or shortages of supplies, [could] harm Saudi long-term interests by destroying the market for its oil."⁶²⁷ A week later, Steven Butler, again writing in the *Financial Times*, wrote that higher prices, "... could affect a generation of investment in

⁶²⁵ Gribben, Roland. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 August 1990. p.2.

⁶²⁶ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 August 1990. p.16.

⁶²⁷ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

industrial plant and energy - heavy consumer durables, where the technology already exists, at a price, to use less energy and less oil.”⁶²⁸

Yet, Vahe Petrossian of *The Guardian*, based on “some observers” argued that “... conservative oil producers in the Gulf had cautiously adopted a policy of low prices to prevent both Iraq and Iran from becoming too powerful, even if this meant they themselves would suffer financially.”⁶²⁹

5.1.3 MODERATE AND CAUTIOUS IN FOREIGN POLICY

Why did Saudi Arabia hesitate to accept help from its closest ally, the United States, to stand against the clear-cut, brutal aggression of Iraq an Islamic, Arab, Gulf state, which in King Fahd’s own words, had carried out “... the most horrible aggression the Arab nation has known in its modern history.”⁶³⁰ Also, why did Saudi Arabia agree in the end to accept the United States’ offer?

The British ‘quality’ press perceived and presented several reasons behind Saudi Arabia’s hesitation to accept the deployment of American troops to Saudi Arabia but most of them agreed that Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy was a policy of cautiousness. Thus, when Saudi Arabia agreed to the United States’ request, James Craig in *The Times* wrote that,

“Decisions taken by the government of Saudi Arabia in recent days must have been agonising. They would

⁶²⁸ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 17 August 1990. p.2.
⁶²⁹ Petrossian, Vahe. *The Guardian*. 3 August 1990. p.2.
⁶³⁰ Unidentified. *Financial Times*. 10 August 1990. p.2.

have been difficult enough for any government. But the Saudis face special restraints. Their Foreign Policy, in line with their temperament, is traditionally cautious and conservative. They don't see things in black and white, do not change course easily, and prefer evolution to confrontation."⁶³¹

Michael Field, of the *Financial Times*, wrote that the Saudi Arabians had an instinctive abhorrence of confrontation. Even though they knew that the rest of the Arab world was aware of where their fundamental interests lie, they always preferred to disguise what they were doing.⁶³² He also wrote that, "As long as nothing discordant or embarrassing [was] said openly, the Saudi government [was] satisfied ... This [was] the essence, not only of King Fahad's personal style, but of the whole Saudi national ethos."⁶³³ Instead of confrontation, Saudi Arabia preferred to mediation. Craig in *The Times* argued that Saudi Arabia "... as the chief, sometimes the only, mediators in inter-Arab disputes, [had] always felt that a mediator who [took] sides, [could] no longer mediate."⁶³⁴ Obviously, accepting the United States' forces would remove Saudi Arabia from such a role. At the Arab affairs level, Tony Walker of the *Financial Times* interpreted Saudi Arabia's policy as traditionally being one of "... seek[ing] consensus wherever possible, and avoid[ing] confrontation at all costs."⁶³⁵

Therefore, instead of accepting foreign protection and then confrontation, it would appear that Saudi Arabia favoured a diplomatic solution. Ian Brodie of the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote that, "The Saudi leaders

⁶³¹ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3. See also McEwen, Andrew. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2. Field, Michael. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.
⁶³² Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.
⁶³³ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*. 9 August 1990. p.2.
⁶³⁴ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.
⁶³⁵ Walker, Tony. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.11.

are cautious and wary by nature. They would have preferred some scheme by which the Gulf crisis could have been defused by quiet Middle East diplomacy.”⁶³⁶ Con Coughlin, also of the *Daily Telegraph*, thought that the Saudi Arabian leaders were seen to “... use a cheque-book for fashioning policy...”⁶³⁷ rather than be involved in confrontation. Consequently, it was very hard for the USA to persuade Saudi Arabian leaders to accept American military deployment. Even before the Gulf crisis, amid the Cold War and the Iranian revolution, Saudi Arabia had resisted an American request to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia because, as Andrew McEwen of *The Times* stated, “The West’s fear that its oil supplies might be disrupted has been matched by the caution of the Saudi Royal Family, an absolute monarchy noted for its conservatism.”⁶³⁸ Thus, as Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out, one of the biggest problems in the process of concluding the international stand against Iraq had been “... to prevent the desert kingdom rulers embarking on a characteristic course of fear-induced appeasement .”⁶³⁹ Therefore, winning Saudi Arabia’s agreement to accept American military deployment was seen by the *Daily Telegraph* as “... a signal of achievement ...”⁶⁴⁰ in its own right.

Con Coughlin of the *Daily Telegraph* distinguished between two Saudi Arabian policy styles: an old one and a modern one. The former one prevailed before the oil era and the latter one prevailed during the oil-wealth of Saudi Arabia. On this, Con Coughlin wrote that,

“The modern Saudi Policy of using a cheque-book
for fashioning policy is enough to make King Abdul

⁶³⁶ Brodie, Ian. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 August 1990. p.1.
⁶³⁷ Coughlin, Con. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.13.
⁶³⁸ McEwen, Andrew. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.
⁶³⁹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.
⁶⁴⁰ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.

Aziz Ibn Saud, the dynasty's Founder and the great Warrior - King, who preferred to settle his arguments by personally removing the heads of his opponents, turn in his grave."⁶⁴¹

When Saudi Arabia, against the expectations of many speculators, allowed or permitted the deployment of American and other troops on to Saudi Arabian territory, Martin Fletcher and Juan Carlos Gumuico of *The Times*, wrote that, "The deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia indicate[d] that the Kingdom [had] abandoned its previous caut[ious] policy."⁶⁴² In a similar vein, Ian Brodie of the *Daily Telegraph* asserted that, "Welcoming American military forces on its territory would be a major shift in policy for Saudi Arabia."⁶⁴³

Fearing an Iraqi military retaliation, particularly before the arrival of enough United States' troops, was also seen as one, if not the main, reason behind Saudi Arabia's hesitation to make a clear decision from the start of the Gulf Crisis. Saudi Arabia had "... long felt threatened by both Iraq and Iran, especially since the Iranian revolution in 1979. It [had] hesitated to take any steps which might precipitate an attack."⁶⁴⁴ Steven Butler of the *Financial Times* wrote that if Saudi Arabia had participated in moves against Iraq, it would have risked provoking Iraqi retaliation.⁶⁴⁵ Thus, by agreeing to accept United States' troops on its soil, Saudi Arabia would have increased the chances of an Iraqi attack on its country.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴¹ Coughlin, Con. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.13.

⁶⁴² Fletcher, Martin and Gumucia, Juan Carlos. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.1.

⁶⁴³ Brodie, Ian. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 August 1990. p.1.

⁶⁴⁴ McEwen, Andrew. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁴⁵ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁴⁶ Butt, Gerald. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.2. See also Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

Another reason behind Saudi Arabia's reluctance to accept American protection stemmed from the belief that accepting foreign troops, "... would mark a fundamental shift in Saudi Foreign Policy. Saudi Arabia would be throwing its lot in decisively with the United States while turning against an Arab neighbour."⁶⁴⁷ Such actions would have threatened Saudi Arabia which was "... committed to the ideal of Arab unity, to the notion that even if a unified Arab State [was] not practicable, Arabs should sort out their own problems without outside intervention."⁶⁴⁸

In addition, as Andrew McEwen of *The Times* believed, Saudi Arabia's action could also have threatened "...[its] wish to be seen as part of the Arab world, which implied being an opponent of Israel."⁶⁴⁹ Even though Saudi Arabia had "... enjoyed warm relations with Washington, it [had] also always been careful to keep its anti-Israel credentials in good order. A move against Iraq could well damage them."⁶⁵⁰ This sensitivity of Saudi Arabia towards its relations with the United States, in the context of the Arab-Israel conflict, could explain why, "The Saudis [had] always hitherto shrunk from overtly soliciting Western help, for fear of provoking their greedy neighbours."⁶⁵¹ Similarly, welcoming American military forces onto its territory, against Iraq, "... would [have been] a major shift in policy for Saudi Arabia which had traditionally kept Washington at arm's length because of the close ties to Israel."⁶⁵² Michael Field of the *Financial Times* argued that,

⁶⁴⁷ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁴⁸ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

⁶⁴⁹ McEwen, Andrew. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁵⁰ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁵¹ Keenan, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 August 1990. p.10.

⁶⁵² Brodie, Ian. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 August 1990. p.1.

“Overt agreement to have American forces on its territory runs against all the basic Arab and Islamic instincts of the Saudi Government. The Saudis have always been sensitive about their connections with the United States, the country which is seen first and foremost in the Arab world as the backer of the National enemy, Israel.”⁶⁵³

Further, if Saudi Arabia had accepted United States’ troops, that would have exposed it, at the domestic level, to risks of “... subversion, not just from an angry Iraq, but from extremist Arab and Islamic groups.”⁶⁵⁴

Awareness of the substantial minorities living within the Saudi Arabian state, first came to be a part of the way Saudi Arabia was perceived during the Mecca crisis, and disinformed the press presentation of the issues. Nicholas Beeston of *The Times* explained that subversion could also have come from “... the hundreds of thousands of Arab guest workers living in the country... From Palestinian groups, such as Abul Abbas’s Palestine Liberation Front which [had] already openly announced their allegiance to Baghdad.”⁶⁵⁵ During the early days of the crisis, *The Guardian* reported that, friction was worsening between, “... the Saudis and national groups seen to be supporting Iraq, principally the Yemenis, the Sudanese, the Palestinians and the Jordanians who together total[led] over two million of the workforce [in Saudi Arabia].”⁶⁵⁶ Further threats could also have arisen from among the local Saudi Arabian Shi’ites in the oil rich Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Peter Kemp of *The Guardian* explained that,

⁶⁵³ Field, Michael. *Financial Times*, 8 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁵⁴ Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2. See also Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.

⁶⁵⁵ Beeston, Nicholas. *The Times*. 30 August 1990. p.3.

⁶⁵⁶ Unidentified. *The Guardian*. 18 August 1990. p.3.

“The loyalty of the Shia minority, concentrated around the oil fields in the Eastern province, [was] regarded as highly suspect. Several unexplained explosions and fires at petrochemical installations in the region [had] been attributed to local saboteurs.”⁶⁵⁷

Gerald Butt of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that,

“The Saudis would also be fearful of the backlash effect of helping the Americans in this way. It would certainly herald a swing in public opinion in the region in favour of Iraq in the face of what would inevitably be a described as unwarranted US aggression.”⁶⁵⁸

Therefore, when King Fahd agreed to the United States’ request, in an attempt to rally Arab support, he insisted on having an Arab framework, and insisted that “... forces of his Arab allies must also be involved.”⁶⁵⁹

Another point that should be mentioned here was raised by Andrew McEwen of *The Times*, who wrote that, “The fear that if foreign forces were invited in they might not want to leave...”⁶⁶⁰ was certainly one of the factors behind Saudi Arabia’s hesitation to accept a United States’ military presence on its territory.

Why then, did Saudi Arabia agree to allow the United States’ forces to enter its country and risk threatening its sensitive Arab and Islamic credentials as well as provoking Iraq? Peter Stothard of *The Times* believed that two factors seemed to have been decisive in winning Saudi Arabian acceptance: “... the seriousness of the Iraqi threat, and international

⁶⁵⁷ Kemp, Peter. *The Guardian*. 10 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁵⁸ Butt, Gerald. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁵⁹ Tisdall, Simon. *The Guardian*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

⁶⁶⁰ McEwen, Andrew. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.

solidarity:⁶⁶¹ Others, such as Martin Fletcher of *The Times* argued that reports that Iraq had secretly deployed dozens of Iraqi fighter aircraft in Yemen, on the Southern border of Saudi Arabia, combined with Iraq's threat, "... apparently shook the Saudi leadership and were said to have been decisive factors in the Saudi decision ... to ask American troops to defend the Kingdom."⁶⁶² In a similar vein, David Hirst of *The Guardian* explained that,

"King Fahad has now done something which, in deference to Pan-Arabism, he would never have dreamt of doing; the threat to his own communities was simply so great that, confronted with a truly fateful choice, a particular sentiment prevailed."⁶⁶³

Another argument was put forward by Lionel Barber and Tony Walker of the *Financial Times* who argued that Saudi Arabia's "...readiness to accept an open U.S. presence on ... [its] territory is an indication of ... [its] concern about the potential Iraqi threat to the Saudi ruling family ."⁶⁶⁴ A similar argument was put forward by Peter Kemp of *The Guardian* who wrote that,

"The ease with which the Iraqi invasion forces swept aside the Al-Sabah family, which had ruled Kuwait for 250 years, sent a shiver through the emirates, Sheikhdoms and kingdoms of the Arabian peninsula. By denouncing the Al-Sabahs on unrepresentative, unelected parasites, Saddam Hussein was obliquely addressing rulers and ruled throughout the Gulf states."⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶¹ Stothard, Peter. *The Times*. 8 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁶² Fletcher, Martin. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁶³ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 10 August 1990. p.2. See also Butt, Gerald. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁶⁴ Barber, Lionel and Walker, Tony. *Financial Times*. 8 August 1990. p.14.

⁶⁶⁵ Kemp, Peter. *The Guardian*. 10 August 1990. p.2.

Another opinion was put forward by James Craig, in *The Times*, who believed that a personal or individual touch had influenced Saudi Arabia's decision to take the unprecedented move.

“[King Fahd], having weighed up all these opinions will have had the final say. It is significant that he has always been attached to the American connections. That attachment has been criticised. The Americans, largely because of their support for Israel, have not always been popular in the Kingdom. But King Fahad seems to have held consistently to the view that in the last resort, the United States was Saudi Arabia's most reliable and most effective support .”⁶⁶⁶

Craig also pointed out in the same article, that historical and tribal relations could have been another supporting factor behind Saudi Arabia's decision.

“Gratitude to the Al-Sabahs of Kuwait will have been an important factor, (for) not only are the Al-Sabahs members of the same trade union, so to speak, but it was from asylum in Kuwait in 1901 that Ibn Saud, the Founder of Saudi Arabia, launched the commando raid on Riyadh which recovered his father's usurped domain. This claim on Saudi support, even though it is 90 years old, will not have been forgotten.”⁶⁶⁷

Saudi Arabia's decision to accept American military troops and their presence on its territory, thus presented, at least within the British 'quality' papers, the dilemma of Saudi Arabian policy in a way which both reaffirmed established images and raised new ones. The aim of the following section, is to examine both of these types of images.

⁶⁶⁶ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3. See also Butt, Gerald. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁶⁷ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

5.1.4 SAUDI ARABIA'S ISLAMIC STATUS

To most Muslims, the division on the crisis between pro-Iraqi groups and pro-Kuwaiti groups was determined by the arrival of the American troops in Saudi Arabia. As Patrick Bishop of the *Daily Telegraph* put it, their arrival "...decided the issues. The fundamentalists can argue that the Saudis have forfeited sympathy by allowing in foreigners hostile to a brother Arab state."⁶⁶⁸ For example, in the UK, Hizb ut-Tahrir, a British fundamentalist Muslim party, organised a protest outside the Saudi Arabian Embassy in London against Saudi Arabia's decision.⁶⁶⁹ In Jordan, 5,000 members of the Muslim brotherhood gathered at Amman's University Mosque to demand that Jordan declared a Jihad. Their leader was quoted by Barry O'Brien in *The Times* as saying that, "The battle is against the crusaders and Zionism, led by the U.S."⁶⁷⁰ In Egypt, leaders of the Muslim brotherhood in parliament who opposed the presence of Egyptian troops in Saudi Arabia, were reported by Pugh of *The Guardian* to have stated that, "Sending Egyptians there with the American force, we reject it."⁶⁷¹ A delegation, including four English Muslims and a representative of the Bradford Council for Mosques told the Saudi Charge d'affairs that, "The invitation to foreign forces to protect holy places was a grave mistake."⁶⁷²

In Tunisia and Algeria, both the En Nahda (Dawn) movement and the Islamic Salvation Front respectively, hesitated before taking a position on the Gulf Crisis.

⁶⁶⁸ Bishop, Patrick. *Daily Telegraph*. 11 August 1990. p.3.

⁶⁶⁹ Gledhill, Ruth and Jenkins, Lin. *The Times*. 11 August 1990. p.4.

⁶⁷⁰ O'Brien, Conor Cruise. *The Times*. 14 August 1990. p.10.

⁶⁷¹ Pugh, Deborah. *The Guardian*. 17 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁷² O'Brien, Barry R. *Daily Telegraph*. 17 August 1990. p.7.

Francis Ghilés of the *Financial Times* wrote, that after hearing of the decision to accept American troops in Saudi Arabia, the En Nahda party in Tunisia, had "... denounced the presence of all U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, while in Algeria, Fundamentalists [had] called for the overthrow of all Arab regimes."⁶⁷³ Thus, Conor Cruise O'Brien, writing in *The Times*, claimed that,

"In the eyes of Muslim Fanatics - who are politely referred to as 'Fundamentalists' in the West - the offence of ... Fahad and the ten others ... who have now allied themselves with the United States which is regarded as Israel's master and protector ... [is that] they have allowed their new ally into the land of the holy places. King Fahad, who is pledged to protect Mecca and Medina, and who has now invited infidels into the vicinity, must be particularly in danger ."⁶⁷⁴

Nevertheless, even though the reactions of some of the Islamic communities were against Saudi Arabia, the ineffectiveness of their protests proved beyond doubt that Saudi Arabia had shown and reaffirmed its key Islamic status among the Islamic communities and countries.

⁶⁷³ Ghilés, Francis. *Financial Times*. 22 August 1990. p.2.
⁶⁷⁴ O'Brien, Conor Cruise *The Times*. 14 August 1990. p.10.

5.1.5 SAUDI ARABIA AS A MILITARY POWER

With the exception of the periods of the October 1973 war, the British 'quality' Press had not paid any attention to Saudi Arabian military power, and therefore, no particular image had been formed of it in that respect. However, the Gulf Crisis brought Saudi Arabia's military position into the forefront of the news.

At the outset of the Gulf Crisis, the British 'quality' newspapers stressed that Saudi Arabia and its oil reserves, which were vital to industrial countries in general and America in particular, were vulnerable, and that there was not adequate military power in Saudi Arabia to protect it.

Saudi Arabian oil fields were only 200 miles from occupied Kuwait where, according to Paul Wilkinson in *The Guardian*, Saddam Hussein would be able to advance, "... gain control of the whole country and ... dominate the Gulf without any necessity to conduct military operations over the vast desert areas of the country."⁶⁷⁵ Peter Almond of the *Daily Telegraph* was confident that Iraq "...could also have seized the important King Khaled Military City base at Hafr Al Batin ..., the Jubail naval base and the Dharan air base, home of many of Saudi Arabia's 42 F15C fighters."⁶⁷⁶ Based on American intelligence reports, Lionel Barber of the *Financial Times* wrote that it was believed that Saudi Arabia "... could be overrun within three days by Iraqi forces."⁶⁷⁷ Thus, as Paul Wilkinson in *The*

⁶⁷⁵ Wilkinson, Paul. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.19.

⁶⁷⁶ Almond, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.15. See also Evans, Michael. *The Times*. 4 August 1990. p.7.

⁶⁷⁷ Barber, Lionel. *Financial Times*. 7 August 1990. p.3.

Guardian maintained, Saudi Arabia "... look[ed] particularly vulnerable for blitzkrieg tactics that the Iraq dictator had already used so effectively in Kuwait."⁶⁷⁸ Even though the British 'quality' newspapers generally agreed that, "Saudi Arabia's Military forces [were] regarded as among the best in the area..."⁶⁷⁹ and had "... a lot of expensive military equipment ..."⁶⁸⁰, some writers, such as Professor Paul Wilkinson of *The Guardian*, thought that, "Saudi Arabia's military power would be inadequate to deter a determined Iraqi assault."⁶⁸¹

Several reasons were given in the British 'quality' press for Saudi Arabia's military weakness. One of them was the size of its military manpower. Paul Wilkinson of *The Guardian* explained that,

"Although the Saudi regime have spent billions on improving their defences, they know full well that their small military force of 72,000 does not have much chance of holding out long against Iraq's vast battle hardened army."⁶⁸²

Further, Andrew Gowers of the *Financial Times* asserted that although Saudi Arabia had a lot of expensive military equipment, it had "...fewer than 100,000 men underarms."⁶⁸³ Therefore, Saudi Arabia had previously relied "... heavily upon Jordanian military instructors and their presence in the kingdom until the withdrawal, two years ago, of more Pakistani military 'advisers' who, in reality, did the Saudi's military dirty work for them."⁶⁸⁴ In addition, when planning its military infrastructure,

⁶⁷⁸ Wilkinson, Paul. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.19.

⁶⁷⁹ Almond, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁸⁰ Gowers, Andrew. *Financial Times*. 3 August 1990. p.14.

⁶⁸¹ Wilkinson, Paul. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.19.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Gowers, Andrew. *Financial Times*. 3 August 1990. p.14.

⁶⁸⁴ Gowers, Andrew. *Financial Times*. 3 August 1990. p.14.

Saudi Arabia had based such plans more on the support of allies than on its own military power. Simon O'Dwyer-Russell of the *Daily Telegraph* stated that, "Indeed, most of Saudi Arabia's military contingency plans have been formulated on the assumption that joint US-Saudi action would be the basis of any operation."⁶⁸⁵

In addition to the small size of Saudi Arabia's military force, lack of training and experience were perceived as other reasons for its military weakness. The *Daily Telegraph* wrote that Saudi Arabia was believed to be "... stuffed with advanced weaponry cynically sold to them by the West in its drive to recycle petro-dollars. But their strength in terms of hardware is belied by lack of manpower and battle experience."⁶⁸⁶

John Keegan, also of the *Daily Telegraph*, affirmed such a view of Saudi Arabia's lack of military experience: "The Gulf armed forces are for show only. Saudi Arabia, though armed with the most modern American equipment, lacks the manpower, training and above all, battle experience."⁶⁸⁷

A British adviser, just back from service in Saudi Arabia was reported by Simon O'Dwyer-Russell of the *Daily Telegraph* to have said that, "The Saudi Military operates on the clear "do not - dent - the paintwork" principle. Although the Saudi armed forces possess an impressive arsenal of expensive Western weaponry for parades..."⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁵ O'Dwyer-Russell, Simon. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.12.

⁶⁸⁶ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 August 1990. p.10.

⁶⁸⁷ Keegan, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 August 1990. p.10.

⁶⁸⁸ O'Dwyer-Russell, Simon. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.12.

John Hooper of *The Guardian*, who had pointed out the fighting abilities of the people of Saudi Arabia in the past during the unification of Saudi Arabia, wrote that until that point in time,

“... their army’s only combat experience ... has been a minor role in the six-day war and some skirmishing with Yemen. What is clear is that Saudi officers and troops live in exceptional comfort. At a field mess, the dishes on offer for the officers included quail. The carpet on the floor of the guest house at King Khaled Military City, South of Hafar Al-Batin is well over an inch deep.”⁶⁸⁹

From Hooper’s writing, it seems there were two perceptions of Saudi Arabia’s military power. One prevailed before the oil era and the other one prevailed during the period of the oil wealth. In the former era, Saudi Arabians were described as having “... legendary fighting qualities...”, but during the latter era, Saudi Arabia’s military power was described as “... intact over the past three decades of rising wealth and comfort.”⁶⁹⁰

Although most of the British newspapers criticised the quality and quantity of Saudi Arabia’s military forces, they did, at the same time, express a relatively favourable view of Saudi Arabia’s air force. The latter was seen as being in a good position to at least slow down any military advance against the country. For example, Steven Butler of the *Financial Times* felt that if Iraq advanced into Saudi Arabia, the troops “... would have trouble advancing far ... because the Saudi Airforce [was] relatively sophisticated .”⁶⁹¹ Paul Wilkinson of *The Guardian* affirmed such a view when he pointed out that Saudi Arabia had “... some high quality air power

689 Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 27 August 1990. p.12.

690 Ibid.

691 Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2. See also Keegan, John. *Daily Telegraph*. 4 August 1990. p.10.

including American F-5E5's and Tornados [which] could inflict tremendous damage on any invader.'⁶⁹² Simon O'Dwyer-Russell, of the *Daily Telegraph*, interpreted the relatively high strength of Saudi Arabia's airforce as a social factor because "... service in the Saudi airforce [was] considered an honourable profession ."⁶⁹³ Therefore, when discussing the co-ordination of American, European and Arab forces to stand against Iraq, Saudi Arabia was reported by Michael Evans of *The Times* to have had the confidence to, "... have made it clear that they wanted to command the air forces that operated from their country."⁶⁹⁴

As soon as Saudi Arabia agreed to accept American military support, the attention which the British press had paid to Saudi Arabia's military aspects, disappeared. Later, when some journalists were able to visit Saudi Arabian military bases, they expressed a positive perception of Saudi Arabia's military power in addition to the expensive and sophisticated machines it possessed. Reporting on such a visit, John Hooper of *The Guardian* wrote that, " Saudi troops have never been exposed to the full horrors of war. That is no longer true. Almost 100 journalists were taken to see them in what, it can only be presumed, was an attempt to toughen them up for battle."⁶⁹⁵ Edward Gorman, of *The Times*, affirmed the new impression of Saudi Arabian forces when he highlighted Mr King's (UK Defence Minister) comment on Saudi Arabian military officers' co-ordination with others. Mr King was reported to have said "... he was greatly impressed by the scale of the build-up at Dhahran and the smooth co-

⁶⁹² Wilkinson, Paul. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.19.

⁶⁹³ O'Dwyer-Russell, Simon. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 August 1990. p.12.

⁶⁹⁴ Evans, Michael. *The Times*. 14 August 1990. p.3.

⁶⁹⁵ Hooper, John. *The Guardian*. 28 August 1990. p.2.

operation between British, Saudi and American officers which had eased potentially complex logistics.”⁶⁹⁶

Two decades after its appearance during the October war, Saudi Arabia's military power did not seem to have created a positive impression overall. Neither time nor increasing oil income seemed to have improved the overall quality of Saudi Arabia's military forces, with the exception of it having new and modern equipment. Even though such a perception was rather negative, one positive factor was that it could also be used as evidence to support the image of a Saudi Arabia as a country which had focused its development plans on other things besides the military forces.

5.1.6 “UNDEMOCRATIC” IN THE WESTERN SENSE

Another image of Saudi Arabia which was highlighted in the British ‘quality’ press during the Gulf Crisis, was that of the lack of democracy which existed in Saudi Arabia. Amir Taheri of *The Times* wrote that the Gulf Crisis, “...focus[ed] attention on the fragility of the States’ structure.”⁶⁹⁷ Kathy Evans of *The Guardian* wrote that Saudi Arabia was seen as part of the Gulf States’ “... undemocratic monarchies...”⁶⁹⁸ Similarly, Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* explained that Saudi Arabia, as part of the Gulf region, “... operate[d] through the venal exertion of princely patronage: democracy [was] unknown.”⁶⁹⁹ Amir Taheri of *The Times* argued that the Gulf States’ rulers had, until then, “... felt no real need for support from their own people. Income from oil ...[had made]... them rich

⁶⁹⁶ Gorman, Edward. *The Times*. 29 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁹⁷ Taheri, Amir. *The Times*. 7 August. 1990, p.10.

⁶⁹⁸ Evans, Kathy. *The Guardian*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

⁶⁹⁹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 August 1990. p.16.

enough not to need the people for taxation revenue.” Taheri added that, “Even the privileged “natives” (who enjoyed the fruits of oil prosperity) regard[ed] themselves as unjustly treated by rulers who control[ed] the national income and refuse[d] all accountability.”⁷⁰⁰ Thus, according to Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph*, “...corruption, inequality and absolution of the ruling system...”⁷⁰¹ existed. This, wrote Martin Woolacott of *The Guardian*, made the government “... fearful not only of Iraqi arms but of their own discontented people, who warm[ed] to President Saddam’s attacks on rich feudal rulers of the Gulf, and [took] vicarious satisfaction in his ruthless use of force.”⁷⁰² Amir Taheri of *The Times* suggested that in order to protect Western interests from external threats, which could find support from the local people, “Democracy [had to] be encouraged, with the people involved in decision-making. Such reforms might spell the end of some of the rulers, but no-one need shed tears for them.”⁷⁰³

In contrast to the above arguments, some journalists held that even though Saudi Arabia had no institutional democracy, no parliament, no election and no votes, it had its own particular democratic arrangements. One of them was the Majlis. James Craig in *The Times* pointed out with regard to the Gulf Crisis, that even though King Fahd would have taken decisions himself, he would have held long consultations first, as,

“King has a large public MAJLIS (Council) which any citizen can attend and where anyone can give his views, and smaller gatherings for notables in all walks of life where the issues of the day are discussed.

⁷⁰⁰ Taheri, Amir. *The Times*. 7 August 1990. p.10.

⁷⁰¹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 21 August 1990. p.13.

⁷⁰² Woolacott, Martin. *The Guardian*. 3 August 1990. p.9.

⁷⁰³ Taheri, Amir. *The Times*. 7 August 1990. p.10.

The senior members of the royal family, ... are always consulted. Senior military officers of the army and the airforce will, of course, have been called in for professional advice."⁷⁰⁴

King Fahd was seen by the British 'quality' press to be responsive to popular sentiment and was far from removed from his people. "His eyes and ears are the network of family members drawn from among at least 5,000 princes, the most prominent of whom fill virtually every key position."⁷⁰⁵ , wrote Peter Kemp of *The Guardian*.

In an article entitled, 'Dispensing Daily Aid and Justice in the Shadow of War', Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times* underlined the practicality of Saudi Arabia's political system for the Saudi Arabian people. Mallet quoted comments which a Saudi Arabian man had made when praising the direct relationship between the rulers and the people of Saudi Arabia. The man had said that it was easy to get help from Prince Mohammed, Governor of the Eastern Province,, as he gave it directly without any government procedures. Describing the process in Prince Mohammed's Court, Mallet wrote that, "The Arabian political system was on show ... Prince Mohammed ... handed written petitions to his aids and chatted to bearded and grim-faced tribal leaders."⁷⁰⁶

Thus, as one reader of *The Times*' asked, "Democracy and human rights can be interpreted in many ways: how many leaders in our Western world would allow an open hearing to all and everyone with a petition?"⁷⁰⁷ Or, as Peter Kemp of *The Guardian* asked, "Who needs democracy in Saudi

⁷⁰⁴ Craig, James. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.3.

⁷⁰⁵ Kemp, Peter. *The Guardian*. 10 August 1990. p.2.

⁷⁰⁶ Mallet, Victor, *Financial Times*. 23 August 1990. p.3.

⁷⁰⁷ Reader. *The Times*. 28 August 1990. p.9.

Arabia where the ruler has, dispersed largesse shrewdly to spread oil wealth throughout the country and provide a high level of welfare services?"⁷⁰⁸

Other journalists put forward the notion that Islamic ideas provide an alternative to Western style democracy. In response to an earlier letter printed in *The Times*, which accused Saudi Arabia of being one of the most abominable and lawless states on earth, Patrick Hanratty wrote that such accusations,

"... cannot go unchallenged. I spent five years resident in Jeddah working in a Saudi bank. Saudi Arabia is patently not lawless as it possesses a well-defined legal structure. The influence of Sharia law and Islamic traditions gives the law a strong cultural expression. Some Westerners find accommodating different cultures a distinct difficulty. Fortunately, most expatriates welcome the experience of living in a country of little violence, no vandalism, no graffiti and no public drunkenness. Saudi Arabia is a young and very vulnerable country. The Saudis themselves are a proud and excessively polite people. We should support the Saudis at a difficult time and show ourselves true friends in a time of desperate need."⁷⁰⁹

5.1.7 CONCLUSION

The accounts of the Gulf Crisis which were presented in the British 'quality' press in the summer of 1990, emphasised the overall vulnerability and weakness of Saudi Arabia from the point of view of making a stand against Iraq. The weaknesses that were emphasised were the following ones:

⁷⁰⁸ Kemp, Peter. *The Guardian*. 10 August 1990. p.2.

⁷⁰⁹ Hanratty, Patrick. *The Times*. 25 August 1990. p.11. See also *The Times*. 28 August 1990. p.9. letters.

- (1) the weakness of Saudi Arabia's military forces, in terms of size and lack of battle experience;
- (2) the weakness of its policy, in terms of being very cautious , conservative, and preferring appeasement rather than confrontation; and,
- (3) the weakness of its internal situation, in terms of having an undemocratic system, at least in the Western sense.

Nevertheless, the British 'quality' press also emphasised that Saudi Arabia had been able to manage crises well in the past, and had avoided allowing the potential of such weakness to become actual weaknesses. This ability of Saudi Arabia, along with other qualities, qualified Saudi Arabia to assume a special role in the Gulf Crisis and, as the British newspapers emphasised, Saudi Arabia was crucial and significant to the international stand against the Iraqi aggressors.

First of all, Saudi Arabia had the means of applying United Nations' oil and economic embargos against Iraq by closing down one of Iraq's vital oil pipelines across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea. Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* explained that,

"In the immediate context of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, one of the key pipelines that carries Iraqi oil crosses its territory. It is crucial to the success of the total economic embargoes imposed by the U.N. ..."⁷¹⁰

Lionel Barber of the *Financial Times* wrote that, "...cutting the pipeline would cut ... the Baghdad regimes' financial life-lines." Barber also pointed out that, "Saudi co-operation becomes even more important if the U.S. and

⁷¹⁰ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.

its Western allies are to apply genuine economic pressure on Iraq.”⁷¹¹ The following day, Barber wrote that Saudi Arabian help “... would strengthen the U.S. - led international oil boycott.”⁷¹² Likewise, Kathy Evans of *The Guardian*, who saw Saudi Arabia as setting an example for other countries in the region to back a Western stand, wrote that, “A key indicator [would] be whether the Saudis continue[d] to allow Iraqi oil to flow through the pipeline.”⁷¹³ Tony Walker of the *Financial Times* saw the Saudi Arabians as “... the key players in the Gulf crisis .”⁷¹⁴ *The Times* wrote that, “International solidarity against Iraq depends on states such as Saudi Arabia being able to say that they have taken part in graduated pressure against Iraq aggression.”⁷¹⁵

Secondly, Saudi Arabia was also seen as strategically important, especially during the early period of the Gulf Crisis. Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* regarded Saudi Arabia as,

“... the right place to make a stand ... because it [was] the only country in the Gulf outside Iraq and Iran with anything approaching a sizeable population.”⁷¹⁶

Before Saudi Arabia allowed the deployment of American troops, Martin Fletcher and Michael Evans of *The Times* indicated how important Saudi Arabia was strategically. Saudi Arabia first had to be prevailed upon to make its military facilities available, otherwise, as one senior USA Army official put it, ‘It would [have been] a logistical nightmare. We [had] no

711 Barber, Lionel. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.2.
 712 Barber, Lionel. *Financial Times*. 7 August 1990. p.3.
 713 Evans, Kathy. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.2.
 714 Walker, Tony. *Financial Times*. 8 August 1990. p.3.
 715 Staff. *The Times*. 9 August 1990. p.13.
 716 Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.

infrastructure in the region.”⁷¹⁷ Similarly, Simon Tisdall of *The Guardian* based on unnamed analysts, argued that without any Saudi Arabian help, “... the strategists’ plans would remain merely plans. It was also noted that any really effective defence of Saudi Arabia, or attack on Iraq would necessitate the opening of Saudi Arabian bases to the U.S.”⁷¹⁸ Consequently, from the early days, the USA was reported to have sought “...an expansion and formalisation of facilities for their troops in the Kingdom .”⁷¹⁹

Thirdly, “[as] the only producer with the capacity to rise output sufficiently to prevent [oil] pricing going through the ceiling ...”⁷²⁰ , Saudi Arabia was seen by David Hirst, of *The Guardian*, as crucial to the international stand against Iraq and against the world’s economic instability. Because, as Robert Harvey of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote,

“If the oil embargo against Iraq and Kuwait [could] be made to stick, there [would] be a shortfall of around 4.3 million barrels a day in world oil production of about 6.7 million barrels a day ... This [could] be restored almost overnight if ... Saudi Arabia, agree[d] to pump oil up to full capacity.”⁷²¹

Similarly, Tony Walker of the *Financial Times* asserted that, “The Saudis, the world’s largest oil producers, ... have the capacity to increase production to stabilise the market in the event of an oil embargo against Iraq and its puppet government in Kuwait.”⁷²² The *Daily Telegraph* thought that Saudi Arabia was capable of “... offset[ting] the pressure on prices.”⁷²³

⁷¹⁷ Fletcher, Martin and Evans, Michael. *The Times*. 4 August 1990. p.1.

⁷¹⁸ Tisdall, Simon. *The Guardian*. 6 August 1990. p.2.

⁷¹⁹ Evans, Kathy. *The Guardian*. 7 August 1990. p.2.

⁷²⁰ Hirst, David. *The Guardian*. 3 August 1990. p.17.

⁷²¹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 August 1990. p.16.

⁷²² Walker, Tony. *Financial Times*. 6 August 1990. p.11.

⁷²³ Staff. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 August 1990. p.14.

According to Sivell and Robinson of *The Times*, “[The] oil production capacity of about 3.5 million barrels a day, notably from Saudi Arabia, [was] available to make good the shortfall in the event of a prolonged embargo .”⁷²⁴ Ben Laurence of *The Guardian* saw the role of Saudi Arabia as “... absolutely pivotal. If the Saudis wanted to, they could increase their current production by maybe two million b/d.”⁷²⁵ Thus, when Saudi Arabia agreed to allow American troops to enter the country and closed the Iraqi pipeline, Saudi Arabia was seen to play a prominent role in stabilising the oil market, and prices in particular, by increasing its production level above the OPEC quota, much to the anger of many of the organisation’s members⁷²⁶.

Fourthly and finally, Saudi Arabia’s financial role was important as Saudi Arabia had been willing to, and almost certainly did, contribute to the cost of the military operation. Simon Tisdall of *The Guardian* underlined the fact that Saudi Arabia, “... had indicated to the Pentagon that it would help to defray the bill for the American deployment.”⁷²⁷ At a press conference in Washington, Prince Bander Bin Sultan, Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to the USA, did not deny Saudi Arabia’s contribution. When asked about the issue, he replied, “We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.”⁷²⁸

⁷²⁴ Sivell, George and Robinson, Philip. *The Times*. 6 August 1990. p.21.

⁷²⁵ Laurence, Ben. *The Guardian*. 7 August 1990. p.12.

⁷²⁶ Beavis, Simon. *The Guardian*. 20 August 1990. p.2. See also Butler, Steven. *Financial Times*. 20 August 1990. p.1. See also Barrow, Martin. *The Times*. 21 August 1990. p.17. See also Hoffer, Peter. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 August 1990. p.6.

⁷²⁷ Tisdall, Simon. *The Guardian*. 14 August 1990. p.3.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

If we look towards the future, Saudi Arabia's crucial role in the international community will continue as long as oil continues to be the world's main energy source. Saudi Arabia also plays its cards so as to encourage that to continue. The first element in that policy is the 'moderate' oil policy which it advocates in general. Reasonable prices and an adequate oil supply will discourage oil users from turning to more expensive or less safe, alternative energy supplies such as wind power or nuclear power. Saudi Arabia also has the extra-production capabilities which enable it to ease sudden supply shortages and to restrict the size of price increases triggered by other producers from time to time. But perhaps most importantly, Saudi Arabia has the largest oil reserve in the world, enough to meet world demand well into the next century. As Robert Harvey wrote in a major article in the *Daily Telegraph*,

"Saudi Arabia not only contains a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, it almost certainly has very much more: indeed enough to power the world's industries cheaply until at least the end of the next century. Sheikh Ahmad Yamani ... once remarked of Saudi Arabia's potential reserves: "Fasten your seat-belts. You would be amazed. Aramco, the state-owned Saudi oil monolith, has developed only two of its six concessionaries. The country has 47 proven oil fields, but until recently only 15 were in production. And the country's geology suggests that oil may be present in many unexplored parts."⁷²⁹

In a later article, Robert Harvey confirmed that statement by personal observation, after visiting Saudi Arabia. He wrote that,

"I was struck on a visit to Saudi Arabia, at the time, by how the ratio of production to reserves seemed

⁷²⁹ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 August 1990. p.16.

to stay utterly constant over a long period. Saudi reserves grew by exactly as much as was required to justify a free time level of output. On closer inspection, it turned out that the Saudis were exploiting only one fifth of the area that they had identified geologically as potentially oil bearing ”⁷³⁰

Thus, the Gulf Crisis showed that Saudi Arabia could reasonably claim to have a confirmed place in the international community, based on its significant oil reserves, its ‘moderate’ and ‘cautious’ oil policy, and its ability to respond decisively in moments of major crises.

⁷³⁰ Harvey, Robert. *Daily Telegraph*. 16 August 1990. p.16.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

When interacting through the various channels of communication, we build up an image of others and they build up an image of us. If our relationship with others is influenced by our perception and image of them, then the mass media's perception of others is crucial.

In a democratic society, such as the UK, where public opinion can influence the decision-making process, then the image which the UK media presents about a country, such as Saudi Arabia, is extremely important. This is because the economic and political relations between the two countries can be influenced by what the British perceive that country, to be, as well as how the country, in this case Saudi Arabia, perceives how the British perceive it.

The research findings, which covered a period of almost twenty years, indicate that the typical image of Saudi Arabia in the British press is favourable. In general, categorical terms, Saudi Arabia has been placed under the headings of a 'conservative', (rather than 'backward') 'moderate' and 'developing' country which is developing in reality rather than the term 'developing' being a euphemism for being 'backward' but with special oil, social, ideological and economic powers.

Saudi Arabia has been seen as being founded on Islamic principles and is led and united by tribal forces. Even though development has seemed to overshadow such features, nevertheless, Saudi Arabia's social structure is still perceived as being mainly Islamic and based on a tribal system as these factors still influence the life process inside Saudi Arabia, but not necessarily

in a hierarchical way for development. Until the Mecca crisis, the Government of Saudi Arabia was perceived to be in total control of its tribes and religious forces, however, the attack on the Grand Mosque suggested that such a perception was questionable. Nevertheless, the way the Saudi Arabian Government reacted and resolved the crisis, and the level of concern shown by the international Islamic community in several Islamic cities, highlighted Saudi Arabia's position in the Muslim conscious and sentiment. Moreover, the perception of the character of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic country was reinforced by the way the Saudi Arabian government reacted to the attack. Saudi Arabia's government was presented as functioning within the Islamic framework when dealing with the group, as the government waited for religious permission to end the Mosque situation before taking any action which might have violated Islamic law. Even though Saudi Arabia was occasionally perceived by the British Press as a monarchy where democracy did not exist, at least in the Western sense, some understanding was shown by the Press of the fact that Saudi Arabia has its own consensual procedures, based on Islamic and tribal systems, through which the people have direct access to the leadership elite.

Even though the British press generally presented an understanding of Islamic culture and practice, Islamic law and the position of women, in particular, were generally negatively presented. The attitude, revealed through the papers which were examined, tended to be that Islamic laws were 'ancient traditions', 'old', 'fundamental', and they were described by a variety of words and phrases such as 'strict version', 'draconian penalties' or 'severity of punishment', 'barbaric behaviour', 'total patriarch incurred adverse attitude towards women's rigid segregation', 'severe terms of punishments' and 'abhorrently punitive'. Only a few positive projections of

Islamic and women's laws which exist in Saudi Arabia, were presented in the British press.

Similarly, although Saudi Arabian people were presented as being 'polite' and 'conservative' people, some of the British 'quality' press argued that Saudi Arabian society was seen to suffer from 'contradiction' and 'hypocrisy' as a result of the gap between what Saudi Arabians should practice as Muslim followers and the reality of their practical daily lives. In addition, contradictions were seen to exist between the Bedouin families and the descendant urban elites, and between the rich, who can travel and enjoy Western traditions, and the poor, who cannot afford to go abroad.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has come to be almost universally perceived as cautious. Saudi Arabia disfavours confrontation and conflict and prefers consensus and appeasement by almost any means. Before the 1990 Gulf Crisis, this was given as the explanation for Saudi Arabia's resistance to allowing the USA to build military bases on its soil, and also, of Saudi Arabia's hesitation to permit American troops to come out to defend Saudi Arabia once the Gulf Crisis broke out, despite the inadequacy of Saudi Arabian forces who were faced with Iraq's army. Saudi Arabian forces were presented by the British 'quality' press as having sophisticated and expensive military equipment but they were seen as lacking in battle experience and above all they had an inadequately sized army against Iraq. Caution about its Islamic and Arab credentials were projected as the main reasons behind Saudi Arabia's initial reluctance and hesitation to allow American troops to enter the country rather than a lack of will or hostility towards the USA.

At the international level, and during the Cold War tension, Saudi Arabia was seen as an anti-communist and pro-Western state. The Saudi Arabian stance against communism was consistently portrayed as an important factor amongst the Arab countries during the 1970s. Saudi Arabia was given much credit for the withdrawal of the Soviet influence from Egypt. This image was affirmed during the 1980s and Saudi Arabia was seen to take an active role in fighting the spread of communism at the inter-Arab level. For example, when Saudi Arabia felt that North Yemen could become the next country to fall under the Soviet influence by its South Yemen proxy, and when conflict between the two Yemens erupted in 1979, Saudi Arabia urgently provided military and financial assistance to North Yemen, mainly to keep it away from the Soviet influence. As a result of its oil-increased income, Saudi Arabia's anti-communist and pro-Western stand extended to a wider international level and was seen as leading to a strengthening of its trade and economic relations with Western or pro-Western states to the disadvantage of the socialist or communist states. The importance of Saudi Arabia's anti-communist stance was heightened by Saudi Arabia's pro-Western attitude in general: Saudi Arabia supported a moderate oil policy, which was designed to keep world oil prices at an affordable level, and was engaged on a large scale in economic and trade relations with Western or pro-Western countries. Saudi Arabia's huge 1970-1980 development plan was based on Western and pro-Western assistance. Further, Saudi Arabia was seen as playing a crucial role in consolidating an Islamic front, against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, through the Islamic Conference Organisation.

In general, it was held that Saudi Arabia believed that 'oil should not mix with politics' and that it advocated a moderate approach to both oil price

and supply. If at times Saudi Arabia departed from such a policy, then pressure from external sources was mainly seen as the cause of such a change. For example, during the October war, Saudi Arabia was believed to have been forced to take a hard-line oil policy against the USA, mainly because Saudi Arabia realised that any further Egyptian and Syrian defeat would bring about an unwanted disturbance in the region. Nevertheless, even when Saudi Arabia agreed to use its oil as a weapon, Saudi Arabia's interpretation of the application of such a weapon was still far more moderate than other Arab countries such as Iraq. Meanwhile, while the latter country struggled to put a total embargo on oil output, Saudi Arabia advocated a reduction on the future or present flow as token measures. During the latter part of the 1970s, Saudi Arabia's oil production policy was believed to have been influenced by a lack of technological resources, a policy division within the royal family over oil conservation aims and Arab and Iranian pressure. However, seeking to protect the stability of the world's economy, trying to rationalise the oil price structure and restoring the solidarity of OPEC were believed to have been the three main factors that influenced Saudi Arabia's oil price increase at that time. Once again, Saudi Arabia's moderate oil policy was presented in the press as being vulnerable to external pressure caused by Iraq's pressure to increase oil prices before Iraq invaded Kuwait. Saudi Arabia's response to Iraqi demands on the oil issues, and on the financial issues, reflected an image of Saudi Arabia as a country which was seeking stabilisation and security: a country that was willing to 'buy' peace at almost any price. Thus, Saudi Arabia was typically presented in the British 'quality' press as a country which was committed to supporting a moderate oil price policy, but one which was seeking compromise rather than confrontation. In addition, it was seen as a country which was willing to increase its prices some way

towards the desires of the 'hawk' members in the contexts of the 1973, 1979 and 1990 oil shocks.

In sum, Saudi Arabia's oil policy was generally presented in the British Press as reflecting a responsible policy towards its own economy, as well as towards the international economy, on whose welfare Saudi Arabia's security and stability depended.

During the 1970s, one major feature of Saudi Arabia's image which emerged in the British 'quality' press was that of Saudi Arabia on the world stage, from almost obscurity as far as the British were concerned. This happened amid a prediction of an increased dependency on oil as an energy source and was based on Saudi Arabia's oil reserves. However, the decision to use oil as a political lever, mainly against the USA during the October war in 1973, not only reflected the strength of King Feisal's leadership and his personal character in taking such a crucial decision, but it demonstrated Saudi Arabia's oil power, projected Saudi Arabia and its King into a prominent leadership position, at least in the Arab region, and also showed Saudi Arabia's vitality to those who depended on oil as an energy source at the world level.

The increase in oil prices, which resulted from the 1973-1974 embargo, enabled Saudi Arabia to engage financially in a huge and fast development plan. This brought strains and dislocation in the social structure of the country which manifested itself in two events, both of which had particular significance for the image of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic country with an Islamic mission. One of them was the attack on the Grand Mosque by those who were opposed to foreign culture and wanted to

conserve, in their old forms, the Islamic and tribal ways of life. The other, was the 'Death of a Princess' affair which arose from the presence of a large number of Westerners in Saudi Arabia as part of the modernisation programme, and of the impact of these people coming into day-to-day contact with Saudi Arabian society and its Islamic culture. During the course of the reporting on both of these episodes, journalists came to question much of the simplified image which they had always held about Saudi Arabia as an Islamic country, and a great deal of that was extremely critical. Nevertheless, in the end, both helped to reaffirm in British eyes the crucial role of Islamic principles and Islamic Sharia law in Saudi Arabia, as well as the place and importance of Saudi Arabia in, and for, the Arab and Islamic community in the world as a whole.

The fears which the attack on the Grand Mosque had initially raised in the British 'quality' press about Saudi Arabia succumbing to internal disintegration, eventually refocused British perceptions onto the importance of Saudi Arabia to Britain and the Western world in general. This helped to further the image of Saudi Arabia as being a country which occupied an important place on the 'world stage' which was covered by the world's media. More importantly, the Grand Mosque crisis highlighted the place and importance of Saudi Arabia in the heart of the Arab and Islamic communities of the world.

Saudi Arabia's status among the above communities came to be seen as not just based on its oil power but on two other factors as well. The first was the location of Islam's most holy places within, and under, 'the Guardianship' of Saudi Arabia, and the second, was that it was from the territory which now constituted Saudi Arabia that the Arabs, who had

carried Islam far beyond it, had originated, descendants of the tribes which still occupied a central position within the structure of the modern Saudi Arabian state. Notwithstanding the political boundaries within the Peninsula itself, and beyond it in the many Islamic countries, it came to be perceived that in a sense Saudi Arabia was the home country for Islam and for people of Arab descent the whole world over. Therefore, what happened to and within Saudi Arabia was of concern far beyond Saudi Arabia itself and this added to Saudi Arabia's importance. The Mecca crisis helped the British 'quality' press to understand and present to its readers why Saudi Arabia was not just important as a major oil producer but that it also had an influence and, to some degree at least, a leadership position within the large Arab-Islamic world itself.

More generally, the image of Saudi Arabia's government which emerged over the period as a whole was that of the 'Guardian of Islam', and this was not just an empty phrase to British readers but was real in a practical sense. The Saudi Arabian government was presented in the British 'quality' press as being ready to use its political and economic resources as a means of returning Islamic lands and rights in East Jerusalem, an objective which was not only a matter of narrow and specific national interest, as manifested in the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, but it was also ready to protect Islam from attack and criticism in general, as shown in the 'Death of a Princess affair'. Saudi Arabia's readiness to use its political and economic resources against those who attacked Islam was also seen at times to have played a vital role in acting as a deterrent to those who might attack Islam in the future, from whatever quarters. Saudi Arabia was seen to have used its economic and financial resources to fight the spread of communist ideology in the Arab and Islamic countries, in part at least, because its attitude

towards communism was based on an Islamic interpretation of socialist and communist ideologies, which Islam regards as atheist.

Islam and oil were, therefore, the main features of the image of Saudi Arabia to emerge in the British 'quality' press. Even though these two factors were seen as being used by Saudi Arabia to support one another, nevertheless, the British newspapers came to emphasise how Saudi Arabia used its oil resources, both politically and financially, for promoting and supporting the Islamic cause, as well as for its own national interests. It was in this sense, that a much fuller understanding emerged of the meaning of the government of Saudi Arabia as being the 'Guardian of Islam'.

One implication for the future which emerged from this study was that the time may be ripe for seeking to project and explain the meaning and concept of the 'Islamic mission'. We believe that during the period under investigation, a sufficient degree of understanding was reached in the British 'quality' press of the importance of the practice and observation of Islamic and Sharia laws and of Saudi Arabia's ability to combine the keeping to its own Islamic principles with a high level of economic modernisation and, of Saudi Arabia being able to manage the potential conflict which these could generate. Saudi Arabia was thus perceived in the British 'quality' press as having set an example for the continuation of the application of the Islamic system within a framework of economic development.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the image of Saudi Arabia, as shown in the literature examined, could not readily be distinguished from the image of 'Arabs' or 'Islam' in general. This study represented a modest step towards identifying and clarifying the image of Saudi Arabia and it showed

that such an image was generally more favourable and positive than the images of 'Arabs' and 'Islam' which were presented in previous literature. At this point in time, it seems clear that further serious and specific studies are needed to elucidate the image of particular Arab and Islamic countries. Such studies should take into consideration the variations in the perception of each country as an entity in itself and should also consider the variations arising from the geographical and cultural contexts in which those countries exist.

With regard to Saudi Arabia itself, more studies need to be undertaken to address the image of Saudi Arabia in other countries apart from Britain. In addition, further studies need to examine the image of Saudi Arabia as portrayed by the Sunday newspapers, magazines and other media such as film, radio, television and popular literature.

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