

David Ottaway discusses the history of Saudi Arabia and U.S.-Saudi relations.

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The Speaker

David Ottaway is a former foreign correspondent for the Washington Post. After 35 years with the Post, Ottaway is now a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, and author of the book, *The King's Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America's Tangled Relationship with Saudi Arabia*.

Review Questions

CHAPTER 1: *Ottaway discusses Saudi Arabia's early history, and how oil has played a key role in US-Saudi relations.*

1. What factors and interests characterized the beginning of the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia?
2. Describe the nature of the relationship between the Saudi ruling family and Saudi Wahhabis.

CHAPTER 2: *Ottaway describes the history of relations between the Saudi ruling family and the religious establishment, as well as the impact of religious activism on Saudi culture.*

1. What tensions have existed between the Saudi ruling family and Wahhabis?
2. What effects did the introduction of religious activism have on the religious culture in Saudi Arabia?

CHAPTER 3: *Ottaway discusses the effects of both the Soviet Afghan War and the first Gulf War on religious activists in Saudi Arabia.*

1. How did the Soviet Afghan War affect religious activism in Saudi Arabia?
2. Describe the development of opposition to the Saudi ruling family among religious activist groups in the 1980's and 90's.

CHAPTER 4: *Ottaway talks about the discontent in Saudi Arabia after the Saudi government asked American troops to intervene during the first Gulf War, and the Wahhabi response.*

1. What was the Saudi government's reasoning in choosing to invite American troops to establish bases in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War?
2. What methods were used in Saudi Arabia to spread the influence of Wahhabism?

CHAPTER 5: *Ottaway discusses the changing goals of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia, and how the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States shifted after 9/11.*

1. What was the Saudi government's reaction to the 9/11 attacks?

Key Figures and Vocabulary

Al Qaeda

A group that encourages violent *jihād* (armed struggle on behalf of Islam) intended to expel foreign influence from the Islamic world and to establish a puritanical Islamic society. Founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden and other *jihādists*, al Qaeda was responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as several other terrorist attacks, before and after 9/11, on U.S. targets abroad as well as in other countries.

First Gulf War (Invasion of Kuwait), 1990

Conflict between the Republic of Iraq and Kuwait in which Kuwait was claimed as the 19th province of Iraq. Forces led by the United States later intervened, and Kuwait was liberated in 1991.

Iranian Revolution (1979)

The overthrow of the Shah and installation of an Islamic Republic, led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Jihadi

Muslim who engages in armed struggle in defense of Islam. This can include attacks on fellow Muslims, including government heads deemed to have abandoned the true teachings of the religion.

King Abdullah bin Aziz al Saud

King of Saudi Arabia and Head of the House of Saud, the royal family of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since the country was established in 1932. Abdullah succeeded to the throne on August 1, 2005.

Webcast: Exploring 9/11 – The World Before and After Supplementary Materials

CHAPTER 6: *Ottaway describes the difficulties the Saudi Arabian government had after 9/11 with jihadi organizations training and staging attacks in the country.*

1. What were religious activists hoping to achieve by staging attacks in Saudi Arabia?
2. How was King Abdullah bin Aziz al Saud convinced to take action against religious activist activity in Saudi Arabia, according to Ottaway?

CHAPTER 7: *Ottaway talks about the current state of the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia.*

1. What does Ottaway suggest are the main differences between U.S.-Saudi relations pre-9/11 and post 9/11?

Questions for Further Discussion

1. Ottaway points to the growing number of Saudis studying in the United States as an indicator of the state of the relationship between the two countries. Why do you think he makes this connection, and what other factors could be important indicators of the nature of the relationship?
2. Taking U.S.-Saudi relations as an example, what are some of the challenges to foreign policy and international relations founded on the concept of oil for security?

Recommended Resources

Ottaway, David. *The King's Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America's Tangled Relationship with Saudi Arabia* (Walker & Company, 2008).

Key Figures and Vocabulary (continued)

Muhammad Wahhab

An Islamic scholar born in present-day Saudi Arabia in 1703, Wahhab advocated for a strict return to the original principles of Islam. Followers of this movement, known as Wahhabism, became known as Wahhabis.

Osama bin Laden

Co-founder and leader of al Qaeda, bin Laden was raised in Saudi Arabia. As leader of al Qaeda, bin Laden oversaw the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as several other terrorist attacks, before and after 9/11, on U.S. targets abroad as well as in other countries.

Salafi

An adherent of the "literalist" theology of Islam that seeks to reform Muslim society through a return to the so-called purer beliefs and practices of the earliest generations of Muslims in the 7th and 8th centuries CE.

Soviet Afghan War (1979 – 1989)

War between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the *mujahideen* (armed militant Islamists) - sparked by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The *mujahideen* were aided by many countries (among them, the United States). Soviet forces withdrew in 1989.

Taliban

Militant Islamist movement which took power in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Soviet Afghan War, ruling from 1996 until 2001. The Taliban has since staged a resurgence in Afghanistan, and continues to fight for power.

Wahhabism

Subset of Salafism - A puritanical reform movement dating back to the 18th century in central Arabia which seeks to cleanse, through violent means if necessary, beliefs and practices that it deems to be un-Islamic.