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The War on Terror, Middle-East Peace, and a Drive around the Ranch: the Rhetoric of US-Saudi Diplomacy in the Post-911 Period

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The War on Terror, Middle-East Peace, and a Drive around the Ranch: the Rhetoric of US-Saudi Diplomacy after 9-11

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In a rhetorical examination of the communicative phenomenon of diplomacy, this study analyzes White House rhetorical strategy following a meeting between George W. Bush and the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. An analysis of White House statements following the April 25, 2002 meeting reveals the use of two rhetorical strategies used to promote US-Saudi policy: prophetic dualism (Wander, 1984) and domestication (Schiappa, 1989).

In one collection of appeals, for example, White House rhetoric makes use of a prophetic dualism (1984) in highlighting the ‘importance’ of the relationship to peace in the Middle-East and in America’s ‘war on terror.’ Here, I argue, official rhetoric creates a new rendition of the Cold War Drama (Stuckey, 1995) with reference to a new rhetorical backdrop provided by the ‘war on terror.’ In a second strategy, official rhetoric domesticates (Schiappa, 1989) the US-Saudi partnership by describing the relationship through a set of relational metaphors. Here, I argue, White House rhetoric expands previous notions of domestication through the use of themes like mutual appreciation, shared respect, and personal bonding to personify the relationship. In light of these new adaptations of rhetorical strategy, scholars must continue to explore the innovations and new uses of Hybrid strategies (Stuckey, 1995) as they appear in foreign policy address.
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The major communicative problem this study will examine is one embedded in a complex multi-faceted relationship between two world powers: the United States and Saudi Arabia. From the 1930s until the present, the US’s relationship with this leading Arab oil producer has satisfied a number of its most vital economic and strategic interests. In the post September 11th period, the American public’s increased concern over national security and the war on terror has given rise to a number of public criticisms of its relations with Arab countries, in particular Saudi Arabia because of its unique proximity to the events of 9-11. Nonetheless, the United States continues to legitimate and promote its policy toward this long-time ally which is a vital economic and strategic partner (Baer, 2003; Unger, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). The Saudi Kingdom, however, maintains a conflicted relationship with the United States that poses a challenge to these efforts.

On the one hand, the Saudis remain the key exporter of US energy needs through their vast petroleum reserves. In addition, they continue to play an integral strategic role in US foreign policy through their accommodation of US troops stationed in the Kingdom as well as their active partnership in several extensive clandestine military operations. Their key support of US energy and strategic interests is balanced however, by their ties to Islamic terrorism and their questionable role in the September 11th attacks. The Kingdom’s allegiance with Wahhabi Islam, its funding for religious schools that preach anti-American rhetoric, and its role in sustaining what some experts have called a hot-bed of Muslim extremism have invited criticism from audiences in the US and
abroad. Taken together, these conflicting views of the relationship bring great difficulty to the task of promoting a pro-Saudi position in the US. For the Bush White House, this task is even more challenging because of the Bush family's close ties to the House of Saud.

In terms of its social and political importance, the US-Saudi relationship deserves scholarly attention because of its impact on global events and world history. This relationship has played a role in many major world events—the emergence of the global oil market, World War II, the Cold War, the Iran-Iraq war, ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the creation of OPEC, the Afghan wars, the rise of fundamentalist terrorism, Osama bin Laden, and the attacks of September 11th, to name a few. At the same time, despite the magnitude of this relationship's impact on world affairs, its stature in public discourse has often been diminished and frequently over-simplified. Pundits and critics frequently refer to the "oil weapon," the "Saudi Vote," or "Bandar Bush," which all make the simplistic suggestion that the Saudis have an influential presence with US policy-makers simply because they own us (Michael Moore's "George of Arabia" Rolling Stone, Oct. 30, 2003). In fact, critics frequently ignore the multiplicity of interests involved in the relationship, assuming that oil is the only motivating factor. Indeed, as I will discuss in this thesis, the real nature of US Saudi relations is much more complex and ambiguous, involving multiple national and corporate interests, numerous historical variables, explosive regional influences, and ongoing domestic political developments in both Washington and Riyadh—all over the course of a 60-year partnership. Despite the relationship's complexities and subtleties, its appearance in public discourse has been
condensed; for this reason, an examination of the rhetoric surrounding this diplomatic relationship can help inform current and future public discourse.

As a communicative phenomenon, the rhetoric surrounding this relationship offers a unique opportunity for scholars to explore intersections between history and public discourse. For rhetorical scholars, particularly those focusing on foreign policy rhetoric, this study will add to current understanding of the rhetorical forms and strategies that officials use to support foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Also promising is an enriched explanation of how foreign policy rhetoric relates to the historical context in which it is situated.

In terms of theoretical value, the academic community should find additional significance in a study that addresses both international relations and communication issues respectively. US-Saudi diplomacy involves a number of issues that should attract researchers in both fields, from geopolitical energy and security issues to intercultural, rhetorical, and organizational discourse. Further, considering the unique issues rooted within diplomatic relationships like this one, it should come as no surprise that at the National Communication Association's most recent national conference several scholars made the case for better integrating these two unique disciplines (Albert, 2004; Dimitrov, 2004; Harper, 2004; Hayden, 2004; Shuter, 2004; Yook, 2004). Hence, the topic of US-Saudi relations carries added significance for communication scholars interested in fusing the two disciplines for the purpose of gaining greater clarity through inter-disciplinary collaboration.

As its chief objective, however, this study aims to explore the communicative phenomenon of diplomacy. Because it is the primary communicative vehicle through
which governments interact, it serves the academy, the public, and the international community to better understand and conceptualize the intricate nuances of this dynamic human process. Serving this interest, an inquiry into the US-Saudi relationship may help facilitate a deepened consideration of diplomatic interactions in other international situations.

It is important to look at the relationship between official rhetoric about US-Saudi diplomacy and its overall historical context because it offers a telling account of one of the most influential global relationships of the 20th century. Indeed, this unique relationship has played a pivotal role in historical events of the past century and beyond. From World War II to the 1973 oil embargo, and through the Israel-Palestinian conflict to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, this relationship has had tremendously influential economic, political, strategic, and cultural dimensions. From the September 11th attacks, to the war in Iraq; from the recruitment, funding, and training of Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden to the stabilization of Oil Prices during the US incursion into Iraq, the Saudis have played a defining role. Therefore, to better understand America’s past, as well as its forthcoming role in international affairs, an examination of the rhetoric of US-Saudi affairs will offer an insightful view of this key partnership.

To this end, I will take a rhetorical approach in analyzing the messages used to promote and legitimate the US-Saudi relationship in the post-9-11 period. Here, the study will examine the strategies evident in official White House rhetoric in high-level diplomatic meetings with the Saudis. Hence, the study’s first and second formal questions arise:

[RQ-1]: How does official rhetoric relate to the overall historical context of US-Saudi relations?
[RQ-2]: What strategies have President Bush and other White House officials used to discuss the US-Saudi relationship during the post-September 11th period?

In the remainder of this chapter, I will review relevant literature on the rhetorical forms of foreign policy rhetoric before addressing the historical analysis required to answer RQ1. Next, I will discuss the methods this study will employ, including a description of its data corpus.

**Literature Review**

A study that combines historical research with rhetorical analysis requires a unique blend of previous research. In order to address RQ1, I will provide a brief overview of US-Saudi relations to 1) summarize the major characteristics and key dimensions of the relationship, and 2) address the relevance of these themes in light of official rhetoric. Here, a comprehensive review of US-Saudi relations (discussed below on p. 23) will identify key events and trends throughout the relationship’s history. Several key historical sources will provide the foundation for the history chapter, and are discussed below in the methods section.

In order to answer RQ 2, a comprehensive review of rhetorical strategy is too extensive and unnecessary for this study. However, to provide theoretical background to explore this second question, I will rely upon a specific genre of public address research within the larger field of rhetorical theory. Within this literature, a considerable volume of scholarship has examined rhetorical conventions of foreign policy address (Ivie, 1980; Wander, 1984; Schiappa, 1989; Stuckey, 1995; Hoolihan, 1986). I will review previous scholarship on foreign policy rhetoric, paying close attention to studies that explore
various rhetorical strategies situated within the context of international affairs. Below, I will outline several of the strategies identified by these authors before explaining how they will inform the rhetorical analysis.

*Rhetorical Strategies in Foreign Policy Rhetoric*

Previous scholarship identifies three conventional strategies evident in foreign policy rhetoric: value-oriented, pragmatic, and hybrid. The primary distinction between these strategies is seen in their reliance on moralistic, value-oriented descriptions versus pragmatic interest-based explanations. This chapter will first outline examples of several value-oriented strategies and the various descriptive appeals that support them. Next, I will turn to examples of pragmatic strategies and their accompanying appeals which embody distinct metaphoric descriptions of international affairs. Finally, I will discuss a third hybrid strategy that combines elements of both value-oriented and pragmatic strategies. By way of introduction, a brief description of each strategy is in order.

Value-oriented strategies become evident when official justifications for foreign policy appeal to moralistic or dramatized notions of good and evil, right and wrong, or fear and redemption (Studkey, 1995; Bostdorff, 2003; Wander, 1984). For example, Bostdorff (2003) has explored President Bush’s use of moral and religious metaphors to frame foreign policy decisions in the Post-September 11th period. In what Stuckey (1995) describes as a *foreign policy drama*, Bush describes the US’s war on terror in distinctly moralistic terms, describing our “crusade” against the “evildoers,” and need for a new national mission to combat this external evil (Bostdorff, 2003, 293, 303; Bush, Jan.
These value-laden strategies dramatize foreign policy issues and allow for appeals to moral values that are commonly recognized by the general public.

In other cases, official rhetoric uses a pragmatic strategy that focuses on ‘national interest.’ For example, in George H.W. Bush’s announcement of the invasion of Iraq, he emphasized the importance of protecting Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, two key sources of oil (Hilsman, 1992). Outlining the nation’s vital interests in the Saudi oil supply and the secondary interest of protecting Israel, Bush appealed to the notion of national interests rather than a dramatized struggle between good and evil. Pragmatic strategies rely on appeals to a more rational sense of national interest, mutual benefit between nations, and other themes that fit within a realist’s framework of international affairs and foreign policy respectively.

Drama, Morality, and Value-Oriented Strategies

Value-oriented strategies rely on a number of descriptive metaphors, which vary depending upon the subject matter and its historical context. The victimage ritual for example, is a rhetorical strategy that has frequently appeared in US justifications for military action (Ivie, 1980). Ivie (1980) identified what he called “victimage rhetoric,” wherein the Johnson administration justified the Vietnam War through the use of a savagery metaphor (1980, 279). This metaphor emphasized the distinction between moral and amoral, right and wrong, and good and evil, allowing for moralistic judgments to justify military action. Johnson’s rhetoric created the impression that the US was drawn into conflict by North-Vietnamese communists who posed an imminent and unprovoked threat to the free world, a depiction fueled by the fear of an unknown danger
threatening the free world as per the ‘domino theory’ (1980, 279). Casting America’s communist opponents as violent and aggressive, and contrasting them with an image of the US as a reluctant free nation acting out of last-resort, the administration utilized this “victimage” ritual outlined by Kenneth Burke (1954; 1967), to justify the US incursion into Viet Nam. This “victimage” strategy relied on several different descriptive metaphors.

The Johnson administration described the US’s actions by juxtaposing three different dramatic metaphors: force vs. freedom, irrational vs. rational, and aggression vs. defense—all fitting within larger topoi of savagery (Ivie, 1980, 279). Although each metaphor appealed to a general sense of right and wrong, good and evil, etc., they were each distinct metaphors deserving individual discussion.

The force vs. freedom motif relies upon a portrait of one’s adversaries as “unspeaking brutes who know no respect for human liberty” (Ivie, 1980, 288). This metaphor dramatizes on one hand, a forceful and brutish enemy to contrast a hesitant but noble nation who values freedom on the other. The contrast arises in President Johnson’s depiction of the looming communist threat as a violent and forceful opponent who necessitated a response from the US in the interest of preserving freedom.

Similarly, the irrational vs. rational dichotomy built upon the notion of an “unspeaking brute” by emphasizing the irrationality of communist aggression. This dichotomy characterized the communist threat as an “irrational and lawless antagonist in opposition to a rational and law-abiding protagonist” (288). The notion of irrationality attached to the aggressor helped justify the notion of a ‘rational’ response and also helped
bolster the public’s impression of the use of American force to stop this apparently unwitting aggressor.

The aggression vs. defense motif is a little different in its rhetorical orientation because it attempts to establish a cause-effect situation in which the US is responding to an aggressive threat; hence the US’s actions appear involuntary as opposed to voluntary (290). It builds upon notions of force vs. freedom and rationality vs. irrationality, to support a specific military action. The metaphor describes US intervention as a defensive maneuver as opposed to an offensive one. Perhaps only by constructing an apparently forceful, irrational, and aggressive nation can officials claim that an American incursion is a defensive response to a looming aggressor as it were. Strategically, each of these three metaphors fits within the same conception of warfare, in which the US’s adversaries are cast as antagonists against a monstrous aggressor. The US and its allies can appear a reluctant protagonist drawn into a seemingly unavoidable conflict. Other value-oriented strategies describe conflict through similar dramatic metaphors.

Phillip Wander (1984) identified a strategy he called “prophetic dualism,” which bears close resemblance to victimage rhetoric (1980). This rhetorical strategy describes the larger context of a particular conflict or foreign policy scenario through the use of moralistic dualisms like good vs. evil and right vs. wrong. Employed by the Eisenhower-Dulles administration, prophetic dualism “divides the world in to two camps... One side ... is good, decent, and at one with God’s will. The other acts in direct opposition,” and the resulting conflict between the two is solved only by the victory of good over evil (Wander, 1984, 342). Like Ivie’s force vs. freedom motif (1980), the adversary is depicted as acting in discord with universal notions of “freedom,” “morality,” and
"universal good" (1984). This strategy also appeals to a religious or moral conception of
good and evil, as one side must appear “good, decent, and at one with God’s will” (1980,
342). Indeed, both strategies rely upon the assumption that the world is divided into
different parties with simple, clear, objectives – one right, and one wrong, good and evil,
etc. This reliance upon a morally-dichotomous depiction of the world appears in another
dramatic strategy employed during the Cold War.

Exploring what she called foreign policy drama, Stuckey (1995) explored another
value-oriented strategy, the Cold War drama. Employing this strategy, supported by the
use of W ander’s prophetic dualism (1984), officials described the US-Soviet conflict
appealing to similar notions of good and evil used during the Viet Nam war. Officials
created a dualism between good and evil, best seen in President Reagan’s famous
depiction of the Soviet Union as the “evil empire.” Aided by the Soviet Union’s fervent
suppression of religious freedom, this metaphor was particularly salient because of its
ability to frame a complex international situation into simplistic dichotomy between good
and evil (Stuckey, 1995). So in part, this characterization operated as a kind of
simplification mechanism by interpreting a complex set of historical and political
circumstances into a condensed and easily-understood moral metaphor (1995).

Simplification also occurs through another type of value-oriented strategy
Schiappa (1989) called Nuke Speak, or “the use of metaphor, euphemism, technical
jargon, and acronyms to portray nuclear concepts in a neutral or positive way” (253).
Schiappa (1989) studied President Reagan’s explanations of nuclear weaponry to find
two different value-oriented strategies: domestication and bureaucratization.
During the Reagan Administration, defense officials used a domestication strategy which relied upon “everyday language to describe the extraordinary in ordinary terms” (Schiappa, 1989, 255). Examples of this strategy appeared in rhetoric that used “friendly metaphors drawn from ordinary language to name otherwise objectionable nuclear weapons, strategy, and war” (255). During this period, atomic bombs that neutralized the populations of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki for example, bore the names “Fat Man,” and “Little Boy” in an attempt to normalize this extraordinary technology (1989, 255-256). Words and phrases like “clean,” “super,” “smart,” “hardware,” “arms race,” and others were used to describe various weapons and strategy to the public (255-266). In sum, Schiappa wrote, “the rhetorical significance of domestication is that it normalizes extraordinary technology.”

Bureacratization also normalized the extraordinary, but without readily identifiable metaphors. As Schiappa (1989) explained, “Bureaucratization is the counterpart to domestication” when “nuclear weapons, nuclear strategy, or nuclear war cannot be conveyed persuasively through the use of friendly metaphors” (256). In such cases, this strategy attempts “either to sanitize the concept so that it appears neutral and inoffensive, or to technologize the concept” through the use of “technical terms or acronyms that only insiders or ‘experts’” may truly grasp (1989, 256-257). A senior military official, for example, described the Titan 2 missile as “a very large, potentially disruptive re-entry system” (1989, 257). In another example, officials called the neutron bomb a “‘radiation enhancement weapon’” (1989, 257). Showing a similar instance, Schiappa offered the following list of prominent acronyms used to describe various weapons and technology: MIRV, MARV, ASW, ICBM, SLBM, GLCM, LOW, LUA,
ELF, EMP, ERW, PAL, MAD, SDI, SBKKV, SALT, BMD, and START (1989, 257).

The effect of these descriptions, according to Schiappa, "is to mystify – to render nuclear policy irrelevant or inaccessible to public investigation and deliberation" (257).

Strategically, these simplistic metaphors operate rhetorically in much the same fashion as domestication strategies.

Although domestication and bureaucratization are value-oriented strategies, they function differently than other strategies like prophetic dualism and the cold war drama. Domestication and bureaucratization function negate or neutralize value; rather than dramatize they nearly trivialize. Unlike dramatic dualisms between good and evil, etc., 'nukespeak' attempts to lessen the dramatic impact of a particular issue. These strategies remove value or notions of dramatic appeal in instances in which, Schiappa would argue, drama may in fact have some merit. As Schiappa wrote, Nukespeak "both for [its] users and for the public as an audience... functions as a ... 'terministic screen'" by devaluing the thing it describes (1989, 253). Whereas other strategies attempt to maximize a certain value or characteristic, both domestication and bureaucratization function to minimize these traits. The outcome is akin to a rhetorical camouflage.

Interestingly, each of these value-oriented strategies describes a particular topic through dramatic narratives like good vs. evil or right vs. wrong. These strategies help re-describe history or technology through the lens of a certain idea or theme. In this sense they are both dramatic and metaphorical; they dramatize certain sets of facts or events and in doing so, help the public understand these subjects though a particular metaphor. Whether describing an act of war through a morally dichotomous framing, or using a simple label to reduce moral or ethical questions about nuclear weaponry,
descriptive metaphors shape lay audience's understanding of foreign policy issues. They allow the public to grasp a topic of complex or enormous proportions—whether a major international conflict between two global powers, or an advanced piece of weaponry—through interpretation. In the end, these strategies hinge upon the rhetor's ability to first, re-describe the issue or subject in questions, and secondly to reframe the audience's perception of it. There are other strategies that re-describe issues much differently.

*National Interest and Mutual Benefit: Pragmatic Strategies*

Pragmatic strategies do not necessarily filter history through a particular lens, at least not in the dramatized fashion of other strategies. Rather, pragmatic strategies explain topics in terms of normative, interest-based rationale. Phillip Wander (1984), for example, identified a strategy he called "technocratic realism," which describes global conflicts in terms of mutual interest and negotiation, favoring "hard-headed calculation" over simplistic religious or moral framing (349). His examination of the Kennedy administration's rhetoric revealed the Administration's tendency to describe the world in terms of complex and overlapping national interests rather than good and evil, right and wrong, etc.. Kennedy's rhetoric, Wander wrote, "stressed 'efficiency' over 'morality,'" (349). Kennedy's use of technocratic realism hinged on descriptions of the modern world that were "much too complex for old time religion... not the prophet, but rather a skilled, tough expert is what is needed, one whose mind is untouched by violent and dangerous emotions; one who is wise, analytical, precise" (1984, 349). Completely antithetical to value-laden strategies, Kennedy's rhetorical approach seemed distinctly rational rather
than moralistic. In this sense the strategy embodied realist approach to international affairs.

Similarly, Stuckey (1995) explored the use of *power politics* and *new world order* strategies. These strategies describe nations as "equal moral actors," who attempt to control conflict and avoid confrontation in the interests of the broader international system, as opposed to an explicit, over-arching moral good (216). "Instead of a war to the death between good and evil," Stuckey explained, "the new world order posits fluctuating levels of conflict between a variety of equally ethical alternatives" (217). These descriptions appeal to a sense of realism and fact, and emphasize secular justifications for military action, rather than contrasting moral dilemmas outlined above (217). Here, the power politics metaphor describes international relations by emphasizing opportunities for negotiation based on mutual self-interest between sovereign national actors (Stuckey, 1995; Wander, 1984). In terms of framing, pragmatic metaphors do not simplify or dramatize international events; rather, they acknowledge the complexities and overlapping considerations of the parties involved in explaining justifications for decision-making. While not amoral, per se, this strategy favors rational rather than moral framing.

*Values meet Pragmatism: Hybrid Strategies*

While value-oriented and pragmatic strategies can operate independently, they can also function in tandem with one another. Stuckey (1995) described how official rhetoric sometimes combines both strategies to create a kind of composite hybrid strategy. George H.W. Bush, for example, explained international conflicts through the
use of both ‘Cold War drama’ and ‘new world order metaphors’ (Stuckey, 1995, 218). As Stuckey wrote, Bush “tended to combine the dichotomous moralism of the Cold War drama and its ... prophetic dualism with the cooperation demanded by the rhetorical forms of the new world order drama” (Stuckey, 1995, 218). The new world order drama stems in part from this notion of collective order; it rests on the assumption that a larger international coalition of peaceful states attempts to live in accord western notions of democracy (1995). By contrast, President Bill Clinton employed a hybrid that coupled the power politics and cold war metaphors (1995, 221). Combined with the Cold War narrative, the power politics model emphasizes national actors balancing power against hegemonic forces like the former Soviet Union (1995). Here, a moral dichotomy necessitates a pragmatic interaction between States sharing mutual interest in balancing power against a global threat to freedom (1995). These hybrids can be effective because they may appeal to both a strong sense of morality while also appealing to a sense of rational pragmatism—a blend of idealism and realism.

In sum, varying arrangements of value-oriented and pragmatic strategies provide a comprehensive framework for the following examination of official rhetoric on US-Saudi policy. Existing literature is critical of official rhetoric as such messages seem to distill information to the public through a number of rhetorical strategies: value-oriented, pragmatic, and hybrid. Moreover, whether interpreting developments through a value-laden lens, or explaining key topics in interest-based terms, official foreign policy statements frame and shape issues through the strategic use of language and rhetorical forms, acting as a kind of ‘terministic screen.’ In the rhetorical analysis below, this study will rely upon the literature reviewed above as a basis for interpreting the strategies in

Methods

To answer RQ1, which elucidates a connection between official rhetoric and its overall historical/political context, I read a number of historical, political, and international texts that describe the intricate history of US-Saudi relations. From these texts, I assembled a rough timeline of the relationship, beginning in the late 1930s. In doing so, I chose to focus on the major themes and developments of this relationship by highlighting its dimensions and functions. I was most interested in developments that characterized the interests and motivations of the parties, be they strategic, financial, political, cultural, or economic.

In terms of sources, I chose historical accounts according to two criteria. First, each source was selected based on its ability to provide a unique or previously undeveloped account of a particular aspect of the relationship, either from personal experience or through academic expertise. For example, Richard Clarke’s (2004) testimony comes from his direct experience as the FBI’s counter-terrorism director during several key periods in the relationship. He was directly involved in the hunt for Osama bin Laden, negotiations with Saudi diplomatic and military leadership, and the nation’s response to the events of September 11, 2001. Clarke, along with several others, offers unique personal experience with several key issues within the US-Saudi relationship.
Others may lack such personal experience but still demonstrate a distinct expertise with certain facets of the US-Saudi relationship. Historian Craig Unger (2004), for example, has extensively covered the Bush-Saudi relationship. Writing on the Bushes and conservative politics for the *New Yorker, Esquire*, and *Vanity Fair*, Unger has also served as editor for the *New York Observer* and *Boston Magazine*. Unger’s book, *House of Bush, House of Saud* (2004) focuses exclusively on the development of the Bush-Saudi partnership within the larger context of US-Saudi diplomacy. His heavy reliance on primary sources, extensive and corroborated interviews with direct participants and public officials, and his distinctive reputation as a journalist bolster his credibility when discussing the Bush-Saudi component of the US-Saudi partnership. Although the book became controversial because of allegations of unethical motives and impropriety via the Bush-Saudi family connections, it has withstood criticisms due mainly to the gregarious and well-documented nature of its research. The book’s primary weakness, from a researcher’s perspective, was its apparent intent to expose a particularly negative aspect of the relationship. Nonetheless, his testimony was corroborated by other accounts of the relationship (Baer, 2003; Coll, 2004). I selected Unger’s book, like others, because it offered a previously undeveloped account of a specific aspect of the US-Saudi relationship.

Secondly, I chose texts that showed extensive reliance upon primary sources, personal accounts, interviews, and corroborative evidence. Robert Baer (2002, 2003), for example, frequently cites de-classified government documents, personal interviews with unique sources, and corroborated evidence to support his testimony. Additionally, Baer’s career as a foreign case officer with the CIA gives him background knowledge of recent
and ongoing Middle-Eastern affairs that may surpass those available to a professional journalist or historian. For these reasons, Baer is an example of a source that was chosen in part for his methods and sources.

To address RQ2, I explored the post-9-11 period for a major incident involving the Saudis that was accompanied by a public response from the White House. I found a handful, the most fruitful of which was the Crawford address of late April, 2002, which proved ripe for analysis. Although officials previously fielded questions about the relationship during press briefings, only at this specific address did the President offer a speech that directly approached the issue in positive terms. For instance, instead of answering questions about the US-Saudi policy, the President focuses an entire speech around the issue, making an affirmative persuasive effort on the subject.

As it followed a historical high-level diplomatic meeting with the Crown Prince Abdallah, who previously turned down invitations to meet with the President, the speech had an immediate historical and diplomatic context. The speech occurred in the midst of several important historical developments: heightened conflict in the West Bank, an approaching war in Iraq, and increasing speculation and volatility in world energy markets. Adding to the text's ripeness were several official statements made in the days following the address that echoed the President's key messages. For these reasons I chose a data corpus that included 3 Presidential speeches, 3 White House press briefings, and one speech by the White House National Security Advisor all occurring between April 25 and May 2, 2002. Other incidents, most notably the public exposure of an FBI investigation into allegations that Princess Haifa had indirectly funded several 9-11
hijackers, failed to produce the same volume of official discourse as the Crawford address.

In terms of a timeline, the data corpus begins on April 25, when President Bush gave a speech to report on his meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at the Bush’s family ranch outside of Crawford Texas. The next two addresses were given by the President on April 26th, and 28th at the same location. On the 29th, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor, gave a speech at Johns Hopkins University where she addressed the recent meeting between Bush and Abdullah. Also included were two White House press briefings held at the Crawford Ranch by Press Secretary Ari Fleischer on May 1st and 2nd. Taken together, these statements created a more detailed mosaic of White House strategy by illustrating a cumulative message that was consistent throughout several texts.

In terms of objectivity and neutrality, I should discuss several items. First, this study makes no attempt to present, nor does it intend to imply any moral judgment or ethical decision about the veracity or advisability of US-Saudi Policy. Indeed, this study acknowledges that the US-Saudi relationship is deeply embedded in issues of national security, economic stability, middle-eastern security, global terrorism, high-level corruption, deeply-seeded religious sentiment, and world peace. Considering the magnitude of these issues in concert with ongoing developments in the geo-political community, I do not claim to possess unique knowledge or insight that should qualify me to make any such moral or ethical conclusions about US-Saudi policy. Hopefully this project will better explain the communicative dimensions of the relationship, allowing other scholars to address extended topics in future research.
Secondly, the historical portion of this project is in no way an exhaustive account of US-Saudi relations, Middle Eastern affairs, Wahhabi Islam, the Bush-Saudi family connections, or of US policy toward the Middle East. Rather, Chapter II simply attempts to describe and appreciate the many dimensions of a complex diplomatic and private relationship for the purpose of comparing this history to official rhetoric. There are certainly a number of historical, political, and strategic factors that will remain outside the scope of public knowledge, and this study makes no attempt to unearth or corroborate them. Rather, this study attempts to expand knowledge and understanding of the communicative process that enables functional diplomacy. More specifically, this is a study of strategic communication in an international setting between national actors, so it must observe rhetorical function with a constant eye to history and the circumstances that surround diplomatic actors.

Third, as a researcher, I bring to this study a number of assumptions about the US-Saudi partnership and the relationship between official rhetoric and extant foreign policy. The US-Saudi relationship, contrary to the arguments of detractors, does facilitate the US’s vital interests. Through its supply of foreign oil alone, the Saudi Kingdom supports the US economy and the chosen — albeit Locke-inspired, lifestyles of Americans in ways of which the public is either unaware or unappreciative. Although I find it difficult to condone the US’s gluttonous consumption of oil and petroleum products, I recognize that the US-Saudi partnership facilitates these fundamental needs of US citizens. Until demand drops, supply must court its rise; and hence, the US-Saudi partnership continues to be justified as a necessity to the US’s vital energy interests.
To make a judgment about the relationship’s political advisability is equally troublesome. On one hand, critics point out that the US-Saudi relationship is doomed because of US troops stationed on Muslim holy land. This issue continues to motivate acts of terrorism against US and Western targets across the globe. The rise of Wahhabist Islam in Saudi Arabia and the US compounds this dilemma. Additionally, some regional experts have argued that the Saudi Kingdom is ripe for regime change and will soon fall taking with it the US’s greatly-valued oil supply. For these and other reasons, detractors would argue that the US-Saudi policy is politically inadvisable because it broaches on a risk to national security.

On the other hand, proponents will argue that so long as US energy needs predicate a close military and diplomatic relationship with the Saudis, the White House must continue a pro-Saudi policy. They would argue that a pro US-Saudi policy is advisable for two primary reasons. First and foremost, the US needs Saudi Oil. Secondly, if a President were to close its relationship with Saudi Arabia, the price of oil would skyrocket, and the American public would immediately feel the strain. Moreover, if such a move prompted a Saudi reaction that included withdrawing its considerable investments from US markets, the results to the US economy could be staggering. For these reasons and other reasons, proponents would hold that US-Saudi policy is politically advisable in the face of daunting alternative courses of action.

I also assume that White House rhetoric will, and should, support extant foreign policy. Although certain policies will always receive criticism for moral, political, or other reasons, this should never preclude officials from supporting the President’s policies. I do not believe that all policies deserve public justification, but for the
purposes of a rhetorical analysis, I assume as a matter of organizational reality that White House rhetorical strategy is designed to promote and legitimate the will of the President for better or worse.

Lastly, I should outline my position that White House rhetoric is both intentional and unintentional. As discussed in further detail in Chapter III, I assume that White House rhetoric is strategic insofar as it is designed with a clear purpose, directed at particular audiences, and contains appeals and forms designed to persuade. At the same time, I understand that language and values are inextricably linked; the President’s rhetoric may unintentionally reflect his or her worldviews, ideology, and political or social values. This combination of strategy and worldview creates a rhetorical situation in which the critic must focus on the function of rhetoric rather than attempting to access the rhetor’s motives. Hence, this study will not examine the psychologies of George W. Bush and other White House officials, as it focuses on the functions of their rhetoric in a given historical context.

In terms of chapter structure, Chapter II begins the historical overview of US-Saudi relations, which covers the relationship’s emergence in the 1920s and 30s through its dynamic stages of development in the 1970s, through the late 1990s and into the September 11th period. Chapter III, the rhetorical analysis, examines the two major rhetorical strategies apparent in White House rhetoric during and after the Crawford address of April 25, 2002. Chapter IV contains the discussion and conclusion section of the study, where I outline the results of the study, its implications in terms of rhetorical theory, and finally, a recommendation for current and future White House communication strategy.
II Historical overview of US-Saudi relations

This chapter describes the major periods and events in US-Saudi relations. First, the majority of the chapter will review the major periods of interaction between the US and Saudi governments, arguing that an economic and military partnership emerged in response to the changing needs of both nations as well as the ongoing forces of history. The latter portion of this chapter will focus on the financial and political relationships that connect the Bush family and the Saudi Royal family. There, I will argue that the relationship involved lucrative Saudi investments in US markets that allowed the Saudis unique access to Washington power brokers. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of some major themes found in the historical overview that inform the rhetorical analysis in the following chapter. First, however, it is important to gain an understanding of the overall rhetorical situation to answer my first research question, which is: how does official rhetoric relate to the overall historical context of US-Saudi relations.

To summarize, the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia gained prominence with the decline of British influence in the Middle East in the late 1920s (Klieman, 1970). Soon after, oil was discovered by an American oil company in the Saudi desert. During World War II, the US came to rely upon the Saudis for oil, and they in turn relied upon the US for regional security needs. From there, these two pinnacle issues—economics and security, would expand over decades.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the Saudis were an economic and strategic partner for the US. Defined by major events during different decades spanning several US Presidential administrations, the relationship has both endured and reshaped history in
many ways. During each period of time the US responded to several major regional and global events by rethinking its relationship with the Saudi Kingdom and how to best achieve its regional objectives through this partnership. For example, Washington was forced to reconsider its position in the Arab world after the 1973 oil embargo, when Arab states eliminated their supply of oil to the west. Tied to the US’s support for Israel, the OPEC embargo made the US rethink how it accomplished its regional goals of balancing support for Israel with its demand for Arab oil (Quandt, 1987).

Below is an outline of this dynamic relationship, categorized by time period. Within each time period, this study notes events that had some guiding influence on the US-Saudi alliance. Although I will not attempt to establish causal relationships between certain historical factors, I will attempt to describe developments in the relationship that, on the surface, seem to illustrate the direction, interests, or other fundamental characteristics of the relationship. For the purposes of this study, I will assume “key events” to constitute developments that implicate the US’s vital interests, such as oil supply, protecting Israel, or maintaining stability and security in either the Middle-East, globally, or within US borders.

In covering the relationship, I have attempted to be as descriptive as possible, as I depict the major significant events of the relationship. By way of illustration, I avoid a comprehensive account of relevant history, which would prove far too demanding. Indeed, the US-Saudi partnership played a role in the growth of Western industrialism, every major military conflict since World War II, and the emergence of the GOP, OPEC, world energy markets, and global terrorism. Covering each of these topics in detail is much too cumbersome and unnecessary for this project. Instead, I have attempted to
focus on the most salient events and developments that predicated and impacted the relationship, beginning first and foremost, with the discovery of crude oil in the Arabian peninsula.

Before discussing the major developments in US-Saudi relations over the past 80 years, a brief overview illustrates the pattern of continual growth this relationship experienced. Between the 1920s and 60s, the relationship between the two countries emerged slowly, as the US cultivated a relationship in which it gained a valuable supply of oil in exchange for providing regional security to the newly-formed Saudi Kingdom. In the 1970s, the economic and military aspects of the partnership grew in response to several regional and global developments. Highlighted by the Cold War and a looming Soviet presence in Afghanistan, the 1980s saw the US-Saudi relationship deepen through several clandestine military efforts along with rapid economic development. The 1990s, notable for the Iraq war, growing Arab anti-westernism, and rising concerns over Osama bin Laden, showed both the US and its partner the increasing strategic value of Saudi soil. In the pre-September 11th period, the relationship, or at least the US side, remained focused on the growing threat of terrorism and the hunt for Osama bin Laden, which greatly concerned US policy makers. There was also a less formal component to the US-Saudi relationship that related exclusively to the Bushes, who had close ties to the house of Saud. Together, each of these aspects creates an impression of rapid economic, strategic, and political growth over the several decades of this diplomatic relationship. All of this dynamic development, however, started with the decline of British Imperialism and the discovery of oil on the Eastern Coast of the Arabian peninsula.
The 1920s and 30s were the formative years of the US-Saudi relationship. In an era when the US was seeking foreign oil supplies and the Saudi Arabian theocratic monarchy sought military support from a strong ally, the relationship molded around these two fundamental issues: energy supply and regional security. In this period, the US-Saudi alliance grew around these two strategic and economic imperatives—the two interests that still base the relationship today.

From the 1920s to the late 1930s, both the British and American governments had jockeyed for position in the Middle East (Coll, 2004; Klieman, 1970). The growing industrial shape of both British and American societies enhanced their necessity for oil sources. With the decline of British influence in the emerging Saudi State, and handful of US actors such as oil investors, explorers, and government diplomats courted the Saudis to create a partnership whereby the US could retrieve oil from the vast desert landscape and would allow the Saudis to profit considerably (Coll, 2005; Klieman, 1970).

For the US, the promise of oil solidified in Saudi Arabia on New Year’s Day in 1938, at an oil well named “Number Seven,” in the desert location of Damman near the eastern coast of Saudi-Arabia (Unger, 2004, Appx. B; Baer, 2003, 74). It was there that Standard Oil of California, otherwise known as SOCAL, drilled its first successful well and thereby secured its ability to extract oil from the vast Saudi landscape (2003, 74). This single well would produce over 100,000 barrels in its first two months of operation (Schwartz, 2003, 124). Owned by John D. Rockefeller, Standard Oil, who owned SOCAL, had signed an exploration contract with the Saudi Government that placed it in a position unlike any it had ever fathomed (Baer, 76-77). The contract, signed in King Ibn
Saud’s behalf by his finance minister in 1933, guaranteed Saudi Arabia lucrative payments in exchange for the “exclusive right ... to explore, prospect, drill for, extract, treat, manufacture, transport, deal with, carry away, and export” oil products from underneath Saudi soil (2003, 76). Offering the Saudis an initial loan, annual rent, and additional continuing payments upon the discovery of oil, the American company was promising a sum which today would total over 4.16 million US Dollars (2003, 76).

The Saudi family, whose theocratic monarchy had taken form only years before, was now being offered more money than it had ever seen or even fathomed. In fact, just several years earlier, the Saudi finance minister had carried the entire nation’s treasury around in a small suitcase, in which he deposited the country’s tax revenue from local farmers, traders, and merchants in exchange for a hand-written receipt of credit (Baer, 2003, 76). But public finance systems would be the least of the Royal family’s concerns in the following decades, when its relationship with the west would flourish, offering them more high-level attention from American politicians and policy-makers.

Following the initial profit the country made from oil sales to the west, the 1940s marked Saudia Arabia’s initial entry into the sphere of international politics, as Great Britain and the United States competed for Saudi Arabia’s oil reserves and strategic location (Baer 2003, 76-77; Unger, 2004, 3; Crile, 2003). In 1944, a Japanese invasion of Burma and Indonesia closed two key oil sources for the US, boosting Saudi Arabia’s importance to the West (Baer, 2003, 77). The US drastically increased its diplomatic efforts toward the Saudis and offered an aid package which totaled nearly $100 million (Baer, 2003, 78). This was an attractive offer to Saudi Arabia, which needed a western partner to secure its safety within the region and was worried about Britain’s imperialistic
tendencies when considering its post-war position (Baer, 2003, 81). The US quickly capitalized on this need, and in 1945 offered Saudi Arabia an oil-for-security deal whereby the US helped Saudi-Arabia’s regional security needs if the Saudis agreed to maintain their supply of oil to the United States (Unger, 289; Baer, 2003, 81-84; Crile, 2003).

This deal culminated in a secret meeting between the President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz aboard the USS *Quincy* over Valentine’s Day of 1945, when the two countries cemented their interests in a military-economic pact that secured a trade of oil supply to the west in exchange for a guarantee of US military support within the region (Unger, 2004; Baer, 2003; Crile, 2003, 238).

By 1945, US and Allied forces had nearly tripled their consumption of Saudi crude as its yearly output reached 21.3 million barrels just several years after its first oil well had appeared (Baer, 2003, 77). By then, the US-Saudi relationship clearly took on significant economic and strategic characteristics; the US maintained a steady demand for oil, and the Saudis began to depend upon the US for regional security. The following period between 1945 and the mid-1950s would be characterized by massive oil purchases from US oil companies who would stockpile vast domestic reserves, hoping to meet growing US demand with foreign supply. The stockpiling trend would characterize US-Saudi relations through the next decade, until 1960, when the Eisenhower Administration’s clamp on oil imports would offset this profitable trajectory. (2003, 77, 79, 86-87)

The Saudi position in this relationship would gain great leverage however, with the creation of OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, in 1960.
An oil cartel comprised of the major Arab oil producing countries of the Middle East, OPEC greatly increased its members’ bargaining power with the West (86-87). This power allowed member countries like Saudi Arabia to control the amount of oil they sent to the West, and in an event that impacted the United States’ economy and foreign policy position, they fully exercised this authority years later in the oil embargo of 1973.

1970s: Oil supply, global strategy, and bi-lateral cooperation

The 1970s both deepened and complicated the US-Saudi relationship. The economic and strategic interests upon which the partnership was founded began to bring unforeseen risks to the US both in terms of its energy supply as well as its strategic position within the Arab region. More specifically, the 1970s marked several regional developments that moved the two countries toward greater interdependence. As discussed in this section, a rise in terrorist threats, an Arab attack on Israel in 1973, a debilitating oil embargo shortly thereafter, and a looming Soviet presence broadened both the economic and military dimensions of the US-Saudi alliance. Perhaps for these reasons, the United States deepened its ties to Saudi Arabia by rapidly modernizing the Saudi economy and military.

Rapid Modernization

On the economic front, US domestic oil production plateaued in 1970, yet its heavy domestic consumption of petrol-products was continuing to increase, which some policy analysts argued placed the US in a vulnerable economic position (Quandt, 1987).
Although evidence suggests conservative voices heard at institutions like Brookings supported this notion of vulnerability, others have raised questions about its validity. Recent scholarship, such as works by Rocky Mountain Institute founders Hunter and Amory Lovins make a different argument. In a 2001 *Foreign Affairs* essay, these analysts argued that the ‘vulnerability’ thesis is primarily the result of a one-sided supply-side approach (Lovins & Lovins, 2001). They point to successful demand-side solutions like those implemented by President Carter to reduce US dependence on Arab oil (2001). Following the Carter Administration’s demand-side efforts at fuel efficiency and alternative energy, as well as differences of opinion over the level of US vulnerability to oil shock, both sides agree that the US’s reliance on Arab oil production began to have more serious implications for policy makers (Lovins & Lovins, 2001; Quandt, 1981). The US’s energy and security needs would increasingly overlap with its interests in the region.

On the military front, US support for Israel began to provoke a dramatic response from the Arab world. As the US would realize in 1973, its support for Israel following the Six Day War in 1967 would provoke tremendous backlash from the Arab world in a way the US had never anticipated. In fact, three major inter-related developments --the Yom Kippur war, the 1973 oil embargo, and the rise of fundamentalist terror organizations, would add to a list of US concerns about Middle-East strategy and regional security (Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003).

The Saudi Kingdom was an unlikely partner; beyond its ability to supply oil to the west and facilitate a US defensive presence when in need, the Kingdom might not present itself as a pinnacle priority of US foreign policy. Described by many authors as
backward, undeveloped, and deeply attached to a rigid interpretation of Islam, Saudi society was still barely emerging from a vast landscape still widely inhabited by nomadic tribes and clustered villages (Baer, 2004; Schwartz, 2003; Crile, 2003). In fact, despite the Royal family’s immense wealth, by 1974, the Saudi Government was still using goats as a trash removal system on city and village streets (Perkins, 2004, 81). Like the State’s belief that its royal subjects should not have to pick up trash, the rulers followed what one author called “puritanical idealism;” women were still required to be fully covered; religious police enforced 5 daily prayer obligations; public executions, be-headings, and stonings are common practice (2004, 81-82). Even today, public beheadings continue in the frequently-noted plaza affectionately referred to as “Chop-Chop Square” (Baer, 2003; Perkins, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). Yet despite the fact that Saudi society did not fit the image of a “first world” partner to the west, some policy experts saw Saudi “backwardness” as an opportunity for rapid modernization and a closer relationship with the US (Wells, 1976; Quandt, 1981; Perkins, 2004). In fact, a major “oil shock” would quickly re-cast the US’s interests in aligning itself even closer to this seemingly backward nation.

Many remember the Oil Embargo of 1973. With US domestic oil production peaking its capacity in 1970, the stage was set for the second major event in US-Saudi relations when US oil imports, to the disadvantage of the Saudis, had greatly diminished as a result of oil-import restrictions imposed under the Eisenhower administration (Unger, 2004, 289; Baer, 2003, 86-87). With their sales to the west waning, the Saudis were about to get a chance to drastically improve their advantage by completely cutting-off the flow of oil to the US.
On October 6, 1973, a sacred Jewish holiday, Egypt and Syria launched simultaneous attacks on Israel which initiated what is now called the Yom Kippur war. In addition, to counter the US’s strong support for Israel, the six major Arab oil producers, including Saudi Arabia, announced a 70 percent increase in oil prices on October 16, just ten days later. The cartel pledged to individually cut their supplies to the west by 5 and even 10 percent. Despite this paralyzing embargo, on October 19, President Nixon proposed that the US Congress continue to provide another $2.2 billion in extra aid to Israel on Oct. 19, which prompted a more extreme response from the Saudis and OPEC: a complete Arab embargo, cutting off all oil shipments to the US. (Perkins, 2004, 82-83)

This embargo imposed a major shock on US markets, crippling the US economy. OPEC and Saudi Arabia in particular now exerted tremendous international leverage. OPEC’s drastic supply cuts however, were not nearly as devastating as the Saudi decision to additionally reduce future production quotas (Quandt, 1981, 128). As Brookings analyst William Quandt explained, the extra cut in production created “circumstances that led to a doubling in the posted price of oil” (1981, 128). As regional expert Robert Baer put it, the Saudis realized that “Suddenly, the petrodollar spigot acquired new dimensions—you could open it up to make money, or close it off to make even more” (2003, 87). Indeed, they did, as oil prices skyrocketed. Between 1970 and 1974, Saudi oil jumped from $1.39 a barrel to $8.32 per barrel (Perkins, 2004, 83).

In terms of US-Saudi relations, the embargo represented a moment when Saudi Arabia would rapidly expand its geo-political influence as a result of US dependency. The consequences of the Yom Kippur war, the following oil embargo, and the surge of
Arab oil profits (from 1973-1974, OPEC earnings jumped from $30 - $105 billion) completely recast the nature of Saudi influence with the US (Wells, 1976, 1; Quandt, 1981).

The US could have responded in a number of ways. On one hand, the US might have punished the Saudis for what some could argue was a betrayal of the partnership. Other accounts however, describe the US’s attempts to deepen the economic dimensions of the relationship, in effect drawing itself closer with this apparently unpredictable ally (Quandt, 1981; Perkins, 2004). In an apparently bold and rapid development strategy, the US responded to the oil embargo by rapidly modernizing the Saudi infrastructure, becoming even closer with the Saudi regime. Through both military cooperation and economic development the partnership would deepen and gain new complexities.

On the financial front, US economists were concerned with preventing future oil crises and began to assess the potential for Saudi Arabia to experience rapid economic development, in which the US might play a pivotal and profitable role (Perkins, 2004, 81). The US also pursued a new strategy shortly after the oil embargo which aimed at exploiting the profits of major Arab oil producers and returning those profits to US markets (2004, 83-84). One facet of this strategy, for example, entailed Saudi approval for major spending on infrastructure and military development. Hailed as a landmark success in international development, the rapid modernization of the Saudi state involved huge projects including:

- Constructing electrical generators
- Major energy transmission and distribution lines
- Water, sewage, and other pipelines
- New communication networks systems
- Transportation systems including major highways
- New airports and improved sea ports
In awarding contracts, the Saudis agreed to rely exclusively upon US contractors for these gigantic projects (2004, 83-84). As mentioned above, the US was trying to transfer Saudi oil profits back into US markets; by creating a situation in which the Saudis were paying lucrative contracts to US firms, the US achieved this end but not without some unique arrangements.

Facilitating this strategy, the US Dept. of Treasury created JECOR, the Saudi Arabian Joint Economic Commission, whose primary function was to use Saudi development funds to hire American engineering and construction companies (Perkins, 2004, 84). Ultimately, with no congressional oversight, JECOR spent billions of Saudi Oil money on lucrative contracts, which effectively transferred these billions into US markets (2004, 84-85). It is unclear why the operation lacked congressional monitoring, but this feature of the project allowed greater flexibility in terms of administrative discretion (2004). Commonly referred to as the Saudi money-laundering affair, the arrangement was a target for many critics of the US-Saudi relationship and continues to cause disagreement among experts (2004, 97-98). Perkins (2004), who worked closely with JECOR during this period, was highly critical of the project and described the US’s goals as an attempt to render the Saudi economy “increasingly intertwined with and dependent upon ours” (2004, 85). Although plausible, this account is balanced by Wells’ (1976) analysis, where he offered the following assessment of the Saudi development strategy:
The increase in the export earnings of [OPEC] ... is one of those rare historical events that fundamentally alter economic and political relationships among nations and groups of nations. It is inevitable and desirable that these events be followed by evaluations of their political and economic consequences... (1976, 1)

He suggests that despite the motivations behind JECOR’s activities, the US’s intent to return profits to its own firms inevitably arose from OPEC’s rapid profit gains. While critics and proponents disagree about whether JECOR’s operations were either inevitable or opportunistic by design, they both agree that the rapid development of Saudi infrastructure widened the economic dimension of the relationship. Between 1976 and 1980, Saudi exports to the US would spike from $1.9-12.9 billion dollars (1976, 162). The stage was set for an era in which the complicated relationship of these two countries would deepen financially. This period, as mentioned above, also deepened their geostrategic relationship..

**Military and Strategic Development**

On the military front, the Saudis became more involved in covert actions within their region on behalf of US interests, much to the potential dismay of both Arab and Western publics (Coll, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). With growing unrest in the region, the US became a more integral strategic partner for the Saudis, while simultaneously creating new opportunities for US influence within the region.

The US was dealing with a new global enemy: terrorism aimed at its foreign interests. In Saudi Arabia, a number of armed uprisings, bombings, and a general trend of internal resistance continued to threaten both US and Saudi targets (Coll, 2004). These threats existed outside of the Saudi borders as well. In 1970, the Palestine Liberation
Organization (PLO) hijacked over 300 passengers aboard civilian airliners in Amman, Jordan. Captivating the global media, these terrorists held the hostages for a week, and then released them, shortly thereafter blowing-up the aircraft for the world to see (Landlau & Landlau, 2002). Two years later, Islamic terrorist groups made an even higher-profile hijacking at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, when members of the Black September group held a team of Israeli athletes hostage and later murdered them (Landlau & Landlau, 2002). Over the decade, these events would become foreground for a larger trend of kidnappings, assassinations, embassy bombings, and hijackings that forced the US to create new strategies for defending against this threat (Baer, 2002; Crile, 2003).

Without surprise, during the coming decades the primary constraint on US-Saudi relations would be a concern over US involvement with an increasingly unstable and unpredictable region – one that, in the context of global media, had become the face associated with world terrorist organizations. The numerous future conflicts surrounding US-Saudi relations would stem from this general principle.

During the 1970s however, the culmination of America’s growing dependence on Saudi oil and the rapid rise of hostile acts from Islamic terrorist groups gave both the public and its policy-makers much to fret over. By this time, Saudi Arabia, as one of the US’s primary regional energy suppliers, could be undercut by Islamic radicals who threatened the internal-stability of oil-producing countries. Groups like the Islamic Jihad, Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, Palestinian Liberation Organization, and others would launch sporadic attacks on US targets (Baer, 2002; 2003; Crile, 2003; Landlau & Landlau, 2002). This development, along with the looming Cold War with the Soviets,
led many in the US policy-making community to believe that the only solution to growing regional threats was a strengthened military presence in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia in particular (Clarke, 2004, 37-39; Crile, 2003).

The US military took several measures to address the problem. Aside from deepening its clandestine operations with Saudi Arabia, it began re-engineering many of its operational capabilities. For example, the Pentagon greatly expanded the scope of its Special Operations (SPECOPS) capabilities to include new units in each branch of the military to counter the loosely-organized non-conventional armies of terrorist organizations (Landlau & Landlau, 2002). The Navy’s Special Warfare Command, for example, created a Sixth SEAL team in part to respond to globally-diffused terrorist organizations, and the ultra-secret DELTA team, about which little is found in the mainstream media, was created with a similar design: operational versatility, global deployability, and highly-specialized personnel with distinguished combat experience (2002, 167, 276). Although the emergence of SEAL teams originated in their historical maturation from WWII navy “Frogmen” into remarkably effective hit-and-run operatives in the Vietnam conflict, these formerly underwater demolition crews developed startling new capabilities in their adaptations to the unconventional behaviors of terrorist groups (2002). Yet while the military was addressing strategic threats, other efforts were underway to get better grasp of the religious sources of fundamentalist terror organizations.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism had strong implications for US-Saudi diplomatic relations. The Saudi government was the secular component of a larger regime which included the Wahhabi version of Islam as its religious foundation, a rigid
interpretation of the Islamic religion that undergirded the nation’s founding in much the same way that democratic thinking pervaded the founding of the US and creation of its constitution (Schwartz, 2003). The two are permanent partners. In fact, at the Saudi nation’s founding, the families of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Al Sa’ud made several actions to establish the Wahhabi family as the religious authority of the state, while the family of Al Sa’ud would carry the state’s political rule (Schwartz, 2003, 82; Unger, 2004). They consecrated this agreement by inter-marrying the two families and thus establishing a theocratic monarchy whereby the church and state would become one in the same (Schwartz, 2003, 82). By permanently establishing Wahhabi Islam as its national creed, the Saudi government eventually faced decades of overt resistance and challenges from other sectors of the Arab and Islamic world who strongly detested the Wahhabi religion (Schwartz, 2003). The country’s domestic stability as well as its perceived legitimacy among other Arab populations would continue to balance on this controversial theology.

The Wahhabi strand of Islam, to which Osama bin Laden subscribes, has been described as rigid and extreme (Rashid, 2003). The clan gained its early influence largely through violence and cruelty to other more moderate Islamic sects and also with the help of British aide (Klieman, 1970). During their expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Wahhabis embarked on a bloody campaign to rid the region of other tribes. In 1802, for example, the Wahhabis surrounded the western-Arabian city of Ta’if, and despite the city’s surrender, commenced with killing every man, woman, and child in the city, and further desecrating its Mosques, until the inhabitants were exterminated (Schwartz, 2003).
This type of cruelty gained the Wahhabis much hatred in the Arab world, primarily because of its religious motivation, exemplified in the clan's frequent destruction and desecration of sacred grounds like the tombs of the Prophet Muhammad's wives and other family members (Schwartz, 2003). These and many other departures from traditional Islam have made the Wahhabi clan highly controversial in the Muslim world. Osama bin Laden, for example, was a major outspoken critic of the Saudi regime before his exile (Schwartz, 2004; Clarke, 2004). Angered at a range of issues including both US support for Israel, and the more recent presence of 'infidel' troops in Saudi holy land --Muslim holy cites in particular, bin Laden's revolutionary development in many ways rooted itself in these two issues (Schwartz, 2004; Clarke, 2004). Together with his growing appeal during this time period, bin Laden was emblematic of a fringe sentiment in the Arab world; indeed, he is still celebrated among many Muslims (Schwartz, 2004; Coll, 2004).

In recent times, this controversial sentiment appears in hostility toward the Saudi regime, which has led many experts to question its long-term legitimacy and stability (Baer, 2003; Unger, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). In terms of its military alliance, US-Saudi concerns over the tandem rise of fundamentalism and terrorism brought a difficult question to the forefront of US policy concerns: how to improve relations between the two countries despite growing anti-westernism in both Saudi Arabia and the greater Arab region.

Following the rapid growth the Kingdom experienced with US development efforts, from the Saudis grew an increasing concern for internal and regional security (Perkins, 2004, 87-88; Coll, 2004). With its Arab and Muslim neighbors beginning to
resent its friendly relationship with the West, Israel beginning to envy its tremendous growth, and the Soviets expanding into Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia sought additional military support and training from the US to help solidify its regional position (2004, 87-88; Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003). To protect against both internal and external threats, the Saudis relied upon the US for specialized weapons, facilities, training, and intelligence to modernize its military strength (2004, 87-88; Clarke, 2004; Baer, 2003; Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003). So, in the same fashion as the US physically reshaped the Saudi Kingdom with rapid infrastructure development, the US simultaneously revolutionized the Saudi military.

To summarize, the 1970s showed a continuation of the economic and military arrangements that preceded the decade’s major events. However, as a result of several key developments, the US greatly expanded both its financial and strategic arrangements with Saudi Arabia, which entailed the US’s rapid modernization of the Saudi economy, military, and state infrastructure to the benefit of greater regional influence and a more secure Saudi state. In turn, both of these achievements would enhance the US’s position considerably in the coming decade, when the 80’s presented yet another set of unique global developments.

1980s: The Cold War, power balancing, and clandestine surrogacy

As the economic interests of the US and the Saudi Kingdom continued to progress the 1980s showed more sensitive and clandestine military cooperation between the two countries. The Iran-Iraq war and the bold Soviet attack on Afghanistan provided opportunities for the Saudis to play a key role in politically sensitive US military
operations throughout the Middle-East and Central Asia. The scope of bi-lateral military cooperation expanded through increases in covert actions against a number of regional dictators, terrorist groups, and the Soviet Union. Discussed below, several key developments in world politics provided both the context and the motivation for expanding the scope of US-Saudi relations to combat or otherwise undermine the Soviet Union’s expansion into Afghanistan and also to influence an increasingly volatile conflict in Iran and Iraq (Unger, 2004, 57; Clarke, 2004, 42, 50). In a key communicative development, the sensitive nature of this deepened military cooperation also brought a more plausible need for secrecy in the relationship.

The Iran-Iraq war escalated by the early 1980s, and left the US in a precarious position. Both Iran and Iraq posed significant threats to Israel and Saudi Arabia, which were the US’s two primary regional interests. The threat to Israel became a sensitive political issue on the domestic front in the US (Crile, 2004). Upon entering office on the tails of a landslide presidential victory, the Reagan-Bush administration had publicly maintained a hard line against Islamic Fundamentalists, a position that seemed to bolster support for Israel (Unger, 2004, 62-63; Crile, 2004). In terms of its threat to the region, Iran was considered at the time to pose a potentially hostile threat to Saudi Arabia as well (Quandt, 1981). Because Iran could harm both Israeli security and the US’s oil supply via Saudi Arabia, the country arguably posed an imminent threat to vital US interests. But Iran was only one side of the coin. Iraq also posed an arguable threat to US interests. Comparably speaking, the both became risks to regional security. (Unger, 2004; Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003; Hillsman, 1992; Coll, 2004)
This ambiguous comparison left policy makers in a difficult position. For this and probably numerous other reasons, the Reagan administration was fiercely divided over the Iran-Iraq war, particularly over the question of covert support: who would receive it, Iran or Iraq (Unger, 2004, 62)? On the one hand, Saddam Hussein was a brutal secular dictator who posed an arguable threat to the region and Israel in particular, but if armed, could threaten harm to Iran and thus defend US interests in Saudi Arabia as a third-party covert actor (2004, 62; Hilsman, 1992). On the other hand, some in the Reagan White House argued that Ayatollah Komeini’s fundamentalist regime in Iran publicly abhorred and threatened to destroy the US, but, if armed could undermine Hussein’s ability to strike Israel or do other damage within the region (2004, p. 62). In one of its most controversial decisions of the era, the US decided to secretly arm both Iran and Iraq (2004, p. 62-63). It should be noted that despite accounts of mutual support, one regional expert directly involved in the affair through his work with the CIA, Robert Baer, strongly dismisses this claim, explaining it as a “vintage conspiracy theory that dogged everything [CIA] tried in Iraq – the myth that the US secretly kept Saddam in power” (See: 2002, 178).

In 1984, the US allegedly supported Saddam in his war against Iran through intelligence sharing and weapons sales (Clarke, 2004, 42, 282). In doing so, however, the US enlisted the help of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both of whom apparently acted as a third party channels for the operation (2004, 282). According to Craig Unger (2004), the US funneled billions in aid and weapons to Hussein’s regime, and decided to rely on third party actors to avoid the widespread public condemnation that would have accompanied news of this action (59-65). For similar reasons, the operation with Iran was equally
discrete (2004). Initially, the US armed these countries secretly with the help of outside parties like Israel, which funneled billions in arms, ammunition, and other equipment to Iran in the early 80s (2004, 63). But after this operation came to light, the US allegedly sought another third-party to facilitate ongoing deals of this nature, and that third-party was Saudi-Arabia (2004, 62-63). But in asking Saudi-Arabia to help with this covert arms supplying, the US also needed the Saudis' assistance with another, seemingly unrelated item: Nicaragua.

At the time, Nicaragua had been defending itself against a group of right-wing rebels known as the contras and had become a hot topic for the administration. In fact, responding to ongoing debate on the subject, the US Congress in 1982 voted unanimously (411 to 0) against providing any US support for the contra rebels and the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government in what was called the Boland Amendment (Unger, 2004, 63, 65). During the course of events later called the Iran-Contra affair, and flagrantly in the face of numerous decisions, public statements, and laws dictating the contrary, the US used Prince Bandar and other Saudi intelligence officials as conduits for indirect funding of Iraq, Iran, and the anti-leftist Contra rebels of Nicaragua (2004, 62-64; Crile, 2003; Coll, 2004). In doing so, the Saudis gained both initially, with a White House-approved secret delivery of 400 Stinger missiles to the Saudi government, and later on through greatly improved relations with the US (2004, 65).

By the mid 1980s the Saudis had become a key partner in the US's Middle East operations and stood to both gain and suffer from it. From the American perspective, one could argue that its controversial power-balance proved remarkably successful. Playing two enemies against each other allowed the US to leverage considerable force in the
region. Some have also speculated that the US benefited economically from the decision. According to one economist, escalating war between these two key oil producers drove down the price of Arab oil during the period (Quandt, 1988, 46). Beyond this speculative account, the Iran-Iraq dilemma was only one facet of the US’s position in the region.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan posed an imminent threat to US interests in the region. Although somewhat distant to the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan’s position was close enough to US oil interests that the US intelligence community worried about the Soviets projecting power into the region from Afghanistan in the same manner they influenced Central Europe through the former Eastern Block (Coll, 2004, 42-43; Crile, 2003). The event also heightened Arab fears of Soviet expansion, and also reinforced the value of US military support (2004; 2003). Shortly after the Afghan incursion, President Carter established what historians call the “Carter doctrine” whereby he agreed to defend Saudi Arabia and neighboring United Arab Emirates against foreign attack (Hilsman, 1992, 29; Crile, 2003; Coll, 2004). This effort would eventually entail closer cooperation including intelligence sharing, clandestine operational support, and funding with both Saudi and Pakistani agencies (Coll, 2004, 44-45; Crile, 2003). By partnering with the US in its fight against the “Evil Empire’s” Central-Eurasian expansion, the Saudis offered the US a rare and invaluable strategic partnership becoming a key staging point in the clandestine proxy-war (Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003). There was only one problem; the presence of western troops on the soil that surrounds holy cites like Mecca and Medina was highly controversial for Muslims because it violates scripture (Schwartz, 2003; Coll, 2004). Hence, the US hand in Afghanistan was a very sensitive issue for a number of reasons, religious and strategic topping the list; for this reason, it remained invisible
(Crile, 2003; Coll, 2004). Here is where one sees the developing need for secrecy in the relationship. Because of the sensitive nature of US-Saudi involvement, it seemed more plausible that withholding information about the true on-goings of the relationship made sense for reasons of national security.

During the Afghan wars, the US also asked Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan to help recruit an Arab army to support Afghanistan’s fight against the Soviets (Clarke, 2004, 52; Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003). The Saudis led this effort in assembling volunteers, and in doing so selected Osama bin Laden, son of the billionaire Saudi construction family, the Bin Ladens—a family who was and is very close to the royal family (Unger, 2004, 52; Coll, 2004). Bin Laden’s key directive was to recruit, transport, arm, train, and indoctrinate Arab volunteers and send them to train and fight in Afghanistan (2004, 52; Coll, 2004). This effort proved a remarkably effective, as many young Muslims eagerly joined to defend the Arab world against this atheist threat of communism.

The US’s primary goal in this effort was to force the Soviets out of Afghanistan (Crile, 2003; Coll, 2004). However, fearing high-scale retaliation from the Soviets, the US maintained only an invisible hand in the conflict, a principle that necessitated the use of Pakistani soil as an operational staging point (2004, 44-45; Crile, 2003). In a dramatic display of US support for the Mujahideen, Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson donated a pint of his own blood during a visit to an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan (2003, 191). The support was not merely symbolic. During the period, the US constructed several bases for stockpiling weapons and supplies, and also funneled third-party funding to the Afghan fighters through various Saudi and Pakistani charities and religious organizations
(Clarke, 2004, 50; Coll, 2004; Crile, 2003). Illustrating the level of financial support from Washington, by 1987, funding for the anti-Soviet covert action program had jumped from $35 million in 1982 to $600 million (Clarke, 2004, 50). As the Soviet Union fell, many considered this funding well-justified, as many of the battles against the Soviets were fought through well-funded non-conventional proxy wars within Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South America, and elsewhere.

To summarize, the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iran/Iraq, and even Nicaragua all illustrated the growth in US-Saudi strategic cooperation. From an overview of this period, one sees how the Saudis were becoming a versatile partner in the US’s clandestine operations in the Middle-East and Central Asia. These efforts also supported the economic interests of the relationship insofar as military support facilitated a more secure and stable supply of oil. Because of the discrete and clandestine nature of these operations, the relationship necessitated an even greater need for secrecy. In the end, however, the 1980s again paved the way for greater mutual dependence between the two countries both economically and militarily.

1990s: Iraq, Osama bin Laden, and Growing Anti-Western Sentiment

The central event that shaped the US-Saudi relationship in the 1990s was the US’s incursion into Iraq on behalf of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This event not only evinced a situation in which the US was willing to commit troops to a hostile region to defend its regional interests on behalf of the Saudis, the war also created circumstances in which Saudi Arabia conceded to allow a permanent presence of US troops in Mecca and Medina. Discussed below, these two outcomes of the Iraq war were the most defining
because of their timely coincidence with the rise of Muslim terrorism, Arab Anti-
westernism, and the growing threat of Osama bin Laden.

As the 1990s began, a US invasion of Iraq loomed in the minds of policy makers. Although a number of international scholars and political scientists have examined the various causes and outcomes of the Gulf War (Baram & Rubin, 1993; Pelletiere, 2001; Salinger, 1991; Yetiv, 1997; Smith, 1992; Wilson, 2005), this chapter’s analysis of the conflict will focus on the war’s impact on the US-Saudi partnership. The US incursion into Iraq on behalf of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had key implications on its relations with the Saudis (Wilson, 2005). Leading to a permanent presence of US troops in the Kingdom, the first Gulf War enhanced 1) the strategic importance of Saudi soil, 2) the US military presence in the region, and 3) growing uneasiness and domestic unrest within the Arab world and inside Saudi Arabia over US military presence in Muslim Holy land.

The war escalated after several diplomatic moves by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein. In 1990, following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam made several requests of his neighbors, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to help him recover from the costly war (Hilsman, 1992, 41-42). Reasoning that he was defending the entire gulf region against an imminent Iranian threat, he made several requests to help balance out the costs of post-war reconstruction:

- Forgive all outstanding debt, and offer $30 billion in new loans
- Kuwait, which allegedly stole Iraqi Oil, must pay $2.4 billion
- Emirates must stop violating strict OPEC quotas for oil output
- OPEC must raise the price of oil (1992, 41-42)

The Saudis, along with their neighbors, refused these requests (1992, 42). This was one of many circumstances that eventually instigated Saddam’s increasingly aggressive behavior within the region. Saddam threatened attacks on both Saudi Arabia and Israel –
the US's two main regional interests; the US responded that it would react "vigorously" in such a case (1992, 76). Fearing estimates that damaged Saudi oil fields could spike domestic oil prices from under $20 dollars to nearly $70 a barrel, the US had an imperative to protect Saudi oil fields from Iraqi bombings (1992, 59). As war became an imminent threat, King Fahd granted US permission to station over 425,000 troops in Saudi Arabia; shortly thereafter Bush sent ground, naval, and air units to the region (1992, 1, 96). In the end, Saddam attacked his neighbor, Kuwait, which allegedly was diagonally-drilling for oil under Iraqi soil (1992, 42). Soon thereafter, the US declared war against Saddam after his refusal to leave Kuwait.

At the outset of the invasion, President Bush outlined his 3 primary goals of the Iraqi incursion: first, defend Saudi Arabia; second, force Iraq out of Kuwait; and third, send a punitive message to Saddam (Hilsman, 1992, 71). The Saudis, however, remained concerned over the presence of US troops on Saudi soil, which violated Islamic principles (Clarke, 2004, 59). American B-52s were staging bomb runs on Arab (Iraqi) targets from Saudi soil, which was a lasting thorn for many Muslims who hold religious sentiment for Iraq despite its ruler and equally oppose the presence of western troops near Mecca and Medina (Hilsman, 1992, 115; Schwartz, 2003). Iran's religious leaders urged Muslims to oppose the US troop presence in Saudi Arabia (Hilsman, 1992, 74). That same year, Yemen's President criticized Saudi Arabia for bringing US troops to the region (Hilsman, 1992, 86). Aside from religious concerns, Saudis in particular were worried about collateral damage from Saddam's attacks. Iraqi Scuds struck targets in Dahram, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 Americans, and wounding over 100 (Hilsman, 1992, 127). A large number of Scuds were also fired into Riyadh (1992, 97). Beyond
resentment of US military presence and the fears about collateral damage, the failing state of Iraq was another major issue in the region.

By the war’s end, Saddam was left without a formidable army, and the US came out victorious. But the post-war scenario was a new concern for policy makers. US Secretary of State James Baker introduced a 5-point plan to guide the post-war Iraq, which included two items of great significance to Saudi Arabia and its neighbors. One major point in the Baker plan asserted the need for a permanent US military presence in the region, presumably on Saudi soil (Hilsman, 1992, 117). Secondly, the plan also called for a significant reduction of US dependence on Middle-Eastern oil, a large measure of which was currently supplied by the Saudis (1992, 117). With the Saudis becoming increasingly crucial to the US’s strategic position in a volatile region, the 1990s would demonstrate a rising rate of Arab disapproval of the US presence in the Saudi Kingdom, and of the relationship in general (Clarke, 2004, 62; Schwartz, 2003). In 1991, as post-war peace plans developed, the many Saudi leaders expressed disagreement with a permanent US military presence in the region, for which US negotiators in turn continued to press (Hilsman, 1992, 93).

There was, however, another lasting implication of the Iraq war on US-Saudi relations. By holding back on Saddam, the US let him gain strength, which also seemed to necessitate an extended US military presence in Saudi-Arabia to prevent another attack against Kuwait (Clarke, 2004, 66). To protect against future attacks from Saddam, the Saudis pressed President Bush to begin a significant clandestine military effort to divide and undermine Saddam’s military, in 1992; Bush agreed (Hilsman, 1992, p. 248). However, the domestic and regional unrest was becoming a serious problem and quickly
became visible through a series of terrorist attacks aimed at US interests and allies within the region. In the early 1990's terrorists supported by Iran targeted US interests in Saudi Arabia. First, in 1995, it bombed a Saudi National Guard facility in Riyadh; the second major target was a tower of military barracks in Khobar, which brought the total of US lives lost to 24 in two major attacks (Baer, 2002, 250).

Dealing with the broad problems associated with these types of carefully-planned attacks is difficult for the Saudis even today. According to some analysts, the US’s desires for the region were met with uncooperative efforts to capture terrorists within Saudi Arabia. As outlined by several regional experts (Baer, 2003, 2004; Clarke, 2004; Schwartz, 2003; Coll, 2004), the Saudi royal leadership is greatly divided over its relationship with the West, which undermines any collective attempts at broad reform within the Saudi regime. This may explain why, to the dismay of US officials, the Saudis were uncooperative when the US sought their help in detaining Hizballah terrorist leader Imad Mugmiyah who was flying into a Saudi Airport in 1997 (Clarke, 2004, 153). Many similar examples abound in this period (Baer, 2003; Clarke, 2004), but the internal division within the Saudi royal family did little to prevent its partnership with the US.

To summarize, the Iraq war brought the US-Saudi alliance to a new level of strategic and political involvement. By providing the impetus for both the temporary and permanent presence of US troops on Muslim holy land, the Iraq war deepened the level of bi-lateral military cooperation beyond any previous decade. Unfortunately for both parties, this cooperation would enflame growing Arab hatred of the west which would eventually hurt the US just one year after the decade’s end.
Pre-Sept. 11: Terrorism and the Hunt for Bin Laden

During the months leading up to Sept. 11, 2001, the US’s fight against a growing international terrorist threat became the leading focus between the two countries. Discussed below, Saudi Arabia’s record in the fight against terror was mixed. Although they appeared to cooperate publicly with the US’s efforts to stop the spread of terrorist organizations within its borders, much evidence suggested the contrary – that they quietly resisted.

By the end of the 1990s senior US policy makers became increasingly fearful of a widely growing trend of anti-western and anti-American sentiment in the Middle-East (Baer, 2003; Clarke, 2004; Schwartz, 2003; Coll, 2004). Noticing a growing number of terrorist attacks on foreign US targets and interests, the Pentagon and the US intelligence community increased their efforts at capturing or otherwise stopping the growth of this movement (Clarke, 2004; Baer, 2002; Baer, 2003; Coll, 2004). In doing so, the US depended upon a wide range of clandestine, diplomatic, and intelligence-sharing projects with key partners in the Middle-East like Saudi Arabia (Coll, 2004). In terms of its support and cooperation for these activities, the Saudis played a rather ambiguous role in the war on terror, and the hunt for bin Laden in particular.

On the one hand, many have argued that the Saudis played a crucial role in fighting terrorism in the Middle East. President Bush, for example, has frequently applauded the Saudis for condemning terrorism (April 25, 2002; April 25, 2005), and a several historians and international scholars have highlighted the Saudi’s exiling of Osama bin Laden and its subsequent attempts to subdue al Qaeda attacks within the Saudi Kingdom as evidence of its support (Coll, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). The Saudi government
appeared more motivated to capture bin Laden and other terrorists after the Mecca Affair, when the Muslim Brotherhood (with which Osama was closely affiliated) seized the Grand Mosque in 1979 (Unger, 2004).

At the same time, however, the Bin Laden family’s close connections with the Saudi government, according to one account, made it “impossible to take strong punitive action against him” (Unger, 2004, 96). After all, the bin Laden construction firm was the official custodian and engineer of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina; ironically, the bin Laden company was rebuilding the Grand Mosque when it was attacked (2004, 95). So while the Saudis desperately wished to rid themselves of Osama bin Laden and the Muslim Brotherhood, it walked a very delicate line in actually capturing and punishing them. This tendency, according to some accounts, lead to half-hearted efforts in Saudi cooperation with the US in the war on terror (Baer, 2003; Clarke, 2004).

According to the FBI’s former counter-terrorism Chief, Richard Clarke (2004), Saudi cooperation in the war on terror could be described as lethargic, reluctant, and in some cases resistant (281). According to Clarke, the US gave Saudis intelligence in three areas of concern, to which it received little if any feedback or response:

1) al Qaeda operatives living and operating within Saudi Arabia
2) al Qaeda fundraising and money-laundering in the kingdom
3) The use of Saudi charities to support al Qaeda activities (Clarke, 2004, 281)

Apparently, only after a 2003 al Qaeda truck bombing in Riyadh did the Saudis show any considerable effort in providing information to US intelligence agencies (2004, 281). A similar example occurred just before the September 11th attacks when former Middle-East CIA Officer Robert Baer obtained a list of hundreds of bin Laden operatives who were working secretly in the Gulf Region, including Saudi Arabia (Baer, 2002, 270-271).
After he presented the information to the Saudi Government, they refused to acknowledge it, or distribute the information to other Saudi officials and intelligence agencies (2002, 271). But while the Saudis appeared unhelpful in capturing and investigating terror cells within its borders, they played a key role in pressuring the Taliban, rulers of Afghanistan, to give up Osama Bin Laden.

In 2000, for example, the US was trying to get the Taliban to force the closure of al Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan (Clarke, 2004, p. 207). The US had "no leverage" in negotiating with the Taliban, and perhaps was additionally reluctant to arrange formal diplomatic channels with an essentially rogue theocratic government, which led Washington to seek several third parties to step-in and appeal to the Taliban on its behalf (2004, 208). With the exception of Pakistan, the Saudis were the only major regional state that recognized the Taliban as the official governors of Afghanistan (Woodward, 2002, 87). Along with Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia was a key US surrogate in these negotiations (Clarke, 2004, 208).

Despite an offer of considerable foreign aid, the Saudis pleas for Taliban cooperation in removing Bin Laden were rejected (Clarke, 2004, 208). The Saudis did end formal diplomatic relations with the Taliban, but continued to send diplomats in an attempt to "reason" with the Taliban, whereby Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki offered an even larger sum of foreign aid in exchange for Bin Laden’s extradition; again the offer was refused (2004, 208). Yet while these efforts were unsuccessful, proponents may value the utility of having the Saudis negotiating on America’s behalf.

To summarize, the level of Saudi cooperation in the war on terror was very ambiguous in the Pre-Sept. 11 period. While it appeared the Saudis were selective in
their support for US anti-terror efforts, incongruous accounts (see Unger, 2004; Clarke, 2004; Baer, 2003; Coll, 2004) shows the generally foggy nature of their internal and regional security dilemmas, which cannot receive adequate development here. It is clear that the Saudis publicly supported the effort, however, the extent of this cooperation is unclear.

Post-Sept. 11: Expatriation, Osama bin Laden, Public Criticism, and the War on Terror

The Post-Sept. 11 period showed the most adverse and conflicted state of US-Saudi Affairs. As discussed below, the 9-11 attacks rapidly changed the public’s perception of the Saudis because of their association with the attackers. This factor heightened the level of scrutiny on Saudi Arabia’s cooperation with US anti-terror efforts, which pushed this issue to the fore of the relationship.

The 9-11 attacks were a turning point in the American public’s perception of the Saudis and the US-Saudi partnership in particular. Aside from an Egyptian, a Lebanese, and a man from the United Arab Emirates, the remaining 15 of the 19 alleged hijackers were Saudi Arabian nationals (Coll, 2004). In addition, their suspected leader, Osama Bin Laden, was a Saudi national living off the wealth endowed by the bin Laden family who maintained close relationships with the Saudi Royal family (Unger, 2004). In light of these facts, Americans were stunned when they learned of a massive expatriation of Saudi royal family members and members of the Bin Laden family that occurred with the blessing of the US government during the hours following the terrorist attacks (Baer, 2003; Clarke, 2004; Posner, 2005). In the wake of the September 11th attacks, the US government allegedly sanctioned the immediate departure of numerous members of the
Saudi Royal family and the Bin Laden family, assumedly for fear of hostilities that might emerge against Muslim and Arab Americans (Clarke, 2004; Posner, 2005).

This has been a very controversial topic, and Administration officials have denied the incident even occurred; the official report from the 9-11 commission also fails to address the veracity of this story, which creates considerable ambiguity from a historian’s perspective. Nonetheless, speculation about the event’s occurrence invited a heightened level of public criticism and attention to the US-Saudi relationship, in particular, the ties between the Bush Family and the House of Saud. These events created a new set of questions about the relationship and, when combined with frequent escalations in the Middle-East, brought tremendous pressure on the White House (Fleischer, 2005).

Despite these developments, the US continued its sensitive relationship with the Saudis and commenced an extended round of diplomacy in the Middle East to lay the foundations for the US’s imminent war against terror. In October 2001, after instructing the National Security Council to withhold any information about the trip or its purposes, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld left on a multi-nation tour of the Middle-East that included a stop in Saudi Arabia (Woodward, 2002, 187). When he returned, Rumsfeld reported that the Saudis were in need of regular high-level diplomatic attention; while they were gracious, warm, and complimentary, the royal family remained worried that the US was “unhappy” (2002, 203). It is unclear from Woodward’s account whether the Saudis were referring to the White House specifically, or to the tenor of US public opinion. A month later, General Tommy Franks reported to senior officials of a similar six-country tour, which included Saudi Arabia (Woodward, 2002, 289). He was surprised at the warm reception he received; he related the Saudis’ understanding that the
war on terror could be long, and that the highest Saudi officials pledged their cooperation in the war, despite "resistance" and "friction" in the lower levels of the Saudi government (2002, p. 289). This lower-level heel-dragging may have reflected a division among Saudi leadership over the issue of cooperation with the West.

Shortly following this trip, on November 9, President Bush met with Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud to forge a stronger sense of cooperation (Woodward, 2002, 302). At the meeting the Prince agreed that solidarity would help rid Afghanistan of al Qaeda, after which Bush made the observation that Osama "hates you more than me" (2002, 302). To which the Prince replied that, "it's an honor to be hated by someone like him" (2002, 302). Nonetheless, he assured Bush that the House of Saud would not cut its oil production to the US, which was then supplying roughly 8% of the US's daily consumption (2002, 302).

Before the US's invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Administration publicly acknowledged a growing list of rationales for invading. Although it consistently voiced these concerns publicly, unmentioned was a concern over growing tensions in US-Saudi relations (Clarke, 2004, 265). The first of these, which Vice President Cheney, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and Secretary Donald Rumsfeld all acknowledged, was a growing threat of instability in the Saudi regime, which stemmed from the extended presence of US troops in the country—a lasting "source of anti-Americanism threatening the ... regime" (2004, 265). The Saudis had experienced internal dissent and uprisings for years, but the pattern was growing after US troops remained (Coll, 2004).

US policy makers began to consider the underlying factors of Saudi instability. Border security was among these concerns. In 2002, for example, US analysts were
concerned about the Saudi’s ability to control its expansive unprotected 700-mile border with Yemen, a suspected crossover point for arms trafficking and terrorist groups like al Qaeda and others (Woodward, 2002, 327; Coll, 2004, 537). This concern peaked after the bombing of the USS Cole in a Yemeni port in October of 2000 (Coll, 2004, 537). The event signaled a lapse in the US’s intelligence and military influence in the area (2004, 537). Analysts also became concerned about the pervasive presence of moles within the Saudi government.

Much earlier, the Saudis suspected many moles had infiltrated its military and security forces, which in the words of former FBI counter-terrorist head Richard Clarke, were “riddled with termites” (Clarke, 2004, 282). Another worrisome development was the growing Arab resentment of Saudi-US relations, which along with an increasing anti-Jewish and anti-western sentiment, became a typical theme of anti-American teachings in Mosques and religious schools (2004, 282). Evincing the heated threats from the Kingdom’s militants bent on overthrowing the Saudi regime, Saudi forces were frequently engaging in gun battles and street fighting with armed insurgents. The Saudis discovered a large arms cache intended to supply guerilla warfare efforts against US and Saudi facilities (2004, 282). In sum, the picture of Saudi stability was fading; Baer’s (2003) account of these developments also suggests systemic lapses in the regime’s security that may have long-term consequences for its longevity.

Adding to these internal security issues, however, were more deeply seeded cultural factors. A US general admitted that rising ethnic and extremist tensions in Saudi Arabia constituted an unconventional “battle of ideas” that, compared with a military incursion, was more difficult to surmount (Clarke, 2004, 263). Saudi Arabia ranked 3rd
on a list of three nations prioritized by their importance to US interests, and by the likelihood that they will fall to al Qaeda insurgents (Clarke, 2004, 281). Adding to worries about Saudi vulnerability, the US received evidence that Saudi individuals and charities provided funds and cover for al Qaeda operatives prior to the 9-11 attacks (Clarke, 2004, 270). Clarke (2004) reported that, “Saudi government funds and those of concerned wealthy Saudis flowed to a series of charities and nongovernmental organizations, which in turn provided support for al Qaeda operatives” (282). It appeared that despite US concerns over Saudi stability, the region seemed like a hot-bed for security risks. Another factor adding to this issue was the relationship between Wahhabi Islam and the Saudi Royal family.

Al Qaeda’s fundamentalist beliefs meshed closely with those of many Saudi royals. The Saudis were influential in creating Wahhabist schools and mosques in key jihadist countries, as well as in the US and Europe (Clarke, 2004, 282; Schwartz, 2004). Although the US encouraged this activity in the region during the Afghan wars, now the trend became a worry for policy makers – an example of what intelligence insiders call “blowback” (Coll, 2004; Baer, 2002). The Wahhabist reading of Islam instructed followers to spread the worldwide influence of Islam, and to not tolerate other religions – even alternative and moderate versions of Islam (Clarke, 281; Schwartz, 2004). Moreover, as “keeper of the Two Holy Mosques,” Mecca and Medina, which remains the official title of the Saudi King, the House of Saud continued to derive its religious authority as a “protector of Muslims everywhere,” and “supporter of Islam everywhere” (Clarke, 2004, 281). The Saudi royal family, as directed by its own charter and more informally by its Wahhabi culture, supported the spread of its religion across the globe
(2004, 204). At the same time, its partnership with the west undermined many tenets of Wahhabi Islam.

It appeared that the Saudi royals helped efforts to spread the global jihad and anti-Israeli activities in the Middle-East (2004, p. 282). It also seemed that the Saudis ignored the anti-American teachings and indoctrination of intolerance toward the west that pervaded the teachings in Wahhabi Mosques and Schools within the kingdom (2004, p. 282). By removing a western-styled curriculum, and replacing it with a Wahhabist religious education, the Saudis took another step toward allowing western intolerance (2004, p. 282). These cultural factors could not have boded any sense of promise or stability. Policy makers may have prefigured these developments alongside an equally bothersome picture of the Kingdom’s security issues.

To summarize, the Post-Sept. 11 period created circumstances in which two issues became of paramount importance to both US and Saudi interests: public criticism and the war on terror. Because of the dynamic change in the US perception of Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of 9-11, Americans were increasingly skeptical of the relationship. For this reason, the Saudis’ ability to appear cooperative in the war on terror became a key priority. Here, the ambiguous level of real cooperation in this effort became another key development within this period.

The Bush-Saudi Relationship

Within the larger context of US-Saudi relations is a smaller, more intimate collection of relationships between the Bush family and the Saudi royal family. Considering the longevity and historical impact George HW Bush and George W Bush
have and continue to have on both the domestic and international landscape, their ascendance to power in the past several decades warrants special consideration when discussing the US-Saudi relationship. Although difficult to summarize, an overview of this relationship is in order because of the central role these two families have come to play in both US political circles and in the larger geo-political arena. In much the same way that the US-Saudi relationship transformed in response to key developments in world affairs, the Bush-Saudi partnership adapted to key political and industrial developments following the oil embargo of 1973.

The financial and political connections that existed between the two families seemed to have emerged in tandem. Moreover, as they provide background for the rhetorical analysis of this study, these financial relationships explain yet another dimension of the economic interests underlying the partnership. Although they exist arguably in an un-official realm, they still relate to a study of ‘official rhetoric’ because of their longevity over time, because of their significance within the relationship, and because of their key role they play in constituting the rhetorical situation of the meeting and speeches in Crawford in 2002. In part due to the magnitude of financial co-investment between the families, and the materialization of the partnership in conjunction with the Bush family’s rise to power, this familial relationship takes on unique importance when considered on its own and even more so with an eye toward official rhetoric. What follows is a surface-sketch of the dynamic political and financial ties that emerged and matured from the 1970s onward. These political and financial ambitions would help the Saudis gravitate into a strong personal alliance with the Bush family, which remains today.
The financial ties between the Bush and Saudi families began in the seventies. According to published interviews with Time reporters, James Bath, a Houston attorney connected to Texas oil and the Bush family commenced a series of plane sales to Saudi royals and became the initial conduit for the Bush-Saudi relationship that followed (Unger, 2004; Beaty and Gwynne, 1991). Based on an account given to the Houston Chronicle (Unger, 2004, 33, 307; Urban, 1992), he also made a similar sale to Salem bin Laden, founder of the multi-billion dollar Saudi construction firm BinLaden Corp., and father of Osama Bin Laden; still later, he represented the bin Laden's business interests in America beginning in 1976 (2004, 33). Bath became a channel through which the Saudis developed relationships with various Texas businesses and political figures during this period, which included two future Presidents, a Secretary of State, and numerous other political players. During this period, Houston became a bastion of Saudi oil profits. According to one account, over 80 private Houston firms cemented “strong business relationships” with various Saudi royals during this time (2004, p. 27). These relationships included access to the Bush family, who had emerged as powers in both the political and business sectors.

This trend of investment continued. From the 70s onward, wealthy Saudis began a wave of investments in American markets, which was part of the Saudi reinvestment strategy associated with JECOR, mentioned above. According to Unger (2004), “roughly eighty-five thousand ‘high-net-worth’ Saudis invested a staggering $860 billion in American companies – an average of more than $10 million a person” (28). These investments found their way into major banks, energy companies, defense firms, technology businesses, and media conglomerates (2004, 28-29). Although the Saudis
were clearly interested in profiting from healthy US markets, there was also a political outcome attached to their bidding.

As Unger (2004) explained, these investments were characterized into two general categories. On one hand, “there were blue chips such as Citigroup and AOL Time Warner, and huge, secretive consortiums such as Investicorp, which put billions into companies including Tiffany, Gucci, and Saks Fifth Avenue” (2004, 28). Balancing these high-volume investments, however, was a second type of investment aimed at fostering relationships with political elites. Unger describes these investments in the following passage:

The House of Saud also made a handful of investments in troubled companies that were loaded with debt and regulatory problems –which just happened to be owned by men who had or might have White House ties. (2004, 28)

Here is an investment strategy aimed at fostering relationships that offered access to power. In one example of this strategy, a Saudi investor influenced the rescue of a struggling Harken Energy Co. with a $24 million investment in 1987 when George W. Bush was its director (2004, 200). It appears from this and other accounts (Baer, 2003), that the Saudis sought to broaden their influence with American policy makers through their financial strategies. If this was indeed their aim, they furnished it quite well by drawing themselves closer to a family that would land itself in public offices from Texas to Florida, and eventually three terms in the Oval Office.

The Bush-Saudi relationship demonstrated its fruitfulness when George H. W. Bush rose to the Vice-Presidency in the Reagan administration. James Baker, then Chief of Staff and close political and financial ally of George Bush, owned over 111,000 shares of the Texas Commerce bank which was founded by his grandfather (Unger, 2004, 53).
Simultaneously, Saudi broker Khalid bin Mahfouz teamed-up with Houston developer Gerald Hines to finance the Texas Commerce Tower in Houston, which became home to the Texas Commerce Bank (2004, 53). Amidst a wave of foreign investment in American banks, the Saudis now planted a financial seed that gained them access to the White House through Baker, and later through both George H. W. and George W. Bush. At the center of this strategy, which Unger calls “access capitalism,” is a firm called the Carlyle Group (2004).

The D.C.-based Carlyle Fund is a global private equity firm that currently manages over $24.8 billion, primarily in the defense, aerospace, energy, industry, commercial, and tech sectors (www.thecarlylegroup.com). The firm led what many financial analysts have dubbed a ‘mega-fund’ trend, whereby private equity firms strategically buy out and manage large conglomerates to make them more profitable. In 2005, private equity firms, including Carlyle, managed over 14% of all global corporate mergers (Pearlstein, 2005, E-10). According to Washington Post financial writer Steven Pearlstein, “Carlyle’s strategy has not only been to aim for bigger funds, but to build on its original success with buyouts by offering a variety of other funds” (2005, E-10). The firm deals with high-dollar, high volume buyouts; according to its investor relations department, the firm requires a minimum investment of $5 million from individuals, and $25 million from companies or investor groups just to become what it deems a “qualified purchaser“ (www.thecarlylegroup.com). The scope and volume of the firm’s investments are both key factors in the firm’s attractiveness to wealthy investors looking to leverage large sums of money in the most influential global markets.
Perhaps more attractive, especially in the case of the Saudis, is Carlyle’s centrality to Washington power brokers, the most prominent of whom line its roster of advisors, consultants, investors, and managers. Among these are former Secretary of State James Baker, former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, former director of the Office of Management and Budget, Richard Darman, former British Prime Minister John Major, and former President George H. W. Bush.

The Saudis have actively invested in Carlyle funds in past decades. According to Unger’s (2004) estimate, members of the Saudi Royal family and companies under their control have invested over $1.2 Billion dollars in various Carlyle-owned corporations and funds (296). Their returns have arisen both in numbers and in political access. Among the roster of Carlyle advisors to visit the Saudis on behalf of the firm are George H. W. Bush, James Baker, and John Major, all of whom are heavily invested in the firm (2004, 296).

These overlapping connections have been the source of much public controversy, especially after September 11th, when Carlyle forced the withdrawal of significant funds invested by the Saudi Bin Laden group in response to public criticism of the firm (Kopytoff, March, 2003). Also heightened have been criticisms of ‘war profiteering’ waged by war protesters like Jeff Grubler, who told the San Francisco Chronicle that “the people who are going to benefit from [the Iraq] war are George Bush’s friends, his dad and then himself, when he inherits the money” (Kopytoff, March, 2003). This tenor of criticism stemmed in part from the firm’s traditional focus on defense, aerospace, and energy firms.
More generally, though, the firm has allowed investors like the Saudis unprecedented access both to major US policy makers and lucrative foreign investment opportunities in the world’s largest markets. What Unger calls, ‘access capitalism’ is a strategy to bring political, financial, and strategic interests to bear upon personal relationships, like those between the Saudi royals and the Bush family (2004). But the Saudi’s involvement with the Carlyle group indicates the financial element of a more complex political partnership, much of which occurred through the political ascendance of the Bush family.

In sum, the Saudis began gaining access to US power-brokers through George H.W. Bush’s rise to the White House, as well as the emerging oil and energy markets that originated in the Houston oil boom of the 70’s. What followed, however, was a period in which the Saudis’ political bargaining power improved as the former President’s son George W. Bush began his own rise to power from the Texas Governor’s office to the Oval Office on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was then that the Saudis wielded the most intimate and powerful influence with US policy makers in the White House.

The political and financial success of the Bushes was shared in tandem with the Saudis. They had calculated and maneuvered in such a way as to position themselves as long-time friends of the Bush family. In several sources (Bush, 2003; Unger, 2004; Schwartz, 2003), stories of family visits and intimate get-togethers between Bush family members and Saudi Royals like Ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan color the Bush-Saudi history as warm, familial, and genuine. The sense of familiarity and openness seems to coincide with public accounts of their relationship, but it has also become the target of major public criticisms alleging conflicts of interest and undue influence on US
policy. Evidence supporting these claims has become controversial in its own right, and will not receive extensive treatment here. On the whole, however, the account of the financial and political ties between the families illustrates the depth and complexity of the relationship. Although much of the relationship is hidden behind third parties, ambiguous investor relations, official “deniability mechanisms” (Unger, 2004), and issues surrounding national security, a surface sketch of the relationship reveals there is much more to this relationship than meets the eye.

To summarize, the Bush-Saudi relationship is an important part of the US-Saudi relationship because of the unusually close political and financial connections that exist privately between the families. Through major investment initiatives, political access-giving, and lasting mutual commitments in US foreign policy, this family allegiance is a key development within the larger diplomatic relationship.

Key Dimensions: Complexity, Secrecy, and Multi-dimensionality

The Saudi role in US foreign policy is indeed a complicated and influential one. As it prefaces the analysis chapter of this study, this overview of the US-Saudi partnership comprises a crucial background for a study of official rhetoric. As Phillip Wander (1984) put it, “a full understanding of the rhetoric of American foreign policy must take into account ... its relation to facts and events beyond the language employed, matters on which the lives of tens of millions, if not the whole of humanity, now depend” (340). From this chapter, we see three clear themes that characterize US-Saudi diplomacy: a multi-dimensional collection of national interests, an underlying complexity within each of those interests, and lastly, an inclination towards secrecy.
In terms of the underlying interests of US-Saudi diplomacy, we see three distinct but overlapping dimensions of the relationship: economics, security, and Israeli. Economic interests constitute one key dimension of the partnership. As leading members of OPEC, the chief supplier of "sweet" crude to the US, and major investors in US markets, the Saudis are major players in the global economy, which as outlined above, has predicated one major facet of the relationship. Secondly, the Saudis have continued their deep involvement in US military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia. Their involvement in clandestine operations as well as overt strategic cooperation and intelligence sharing demonstrates the degree to which the Saudis help facilitate the US's vital strategic interests in the region. Lastly, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has both economic and cultural underpinnings. As outlined above, this conflict may not necessarily predicate the relationship in the ways that oil and strategic interests do, but on the other hand, the 1973 oil embargo demonstrates the sensitivity and importance of the issue in the context of US-Saudi relations. In sum, we can conclude from the evidence above that the relationship is built upon a multi-dimensional set of interests.

Within each of these interests, however, remains another layer of complexity. The strategic interests of the relationship, for example, are complex and overlapping. We see this complexity in the clandestine wars fought with Saudi assistance. Saudi support was imperative to US military efforts in the Cold War, the Iran-Iraq war, Gulf Wars I and II, the hunt for Osama bin Laden, and has also become a major bargaining item in the most recent US campaign against terrorism. The variety of conflicts is compounded by the two states' interests in regional security. It is clear that both parties care a great deal about defending Saudi soil, a concern that predicated the US's rapid development of the
Saudi military and intelligence agencies (Quandt, 1981). But what muddles this picture is the fact that each state has its own alliances, enemies, issues, and interests within the region that cannot possibly maintain a consistent sense of congruence. Hence, any attempt to simplify the nature of the US's strategic interest is difficult because of the numerous factors that come to bear on this partnership.

This complexity is also seen in terms of economic interests. First, Saudi oil output is a keystone of the US’s energy policy. This fact alone makes the Saudis a pinnacle consideration for US foreign policy makers. The Saudis also have an enormous amount of capital invested in US markets and US firms, which adds another element to the list of economic ties. Lastly, when we consider Unger’s (2004) argument about access capitalism, it seems that the Saudis are also heavily invested in financing political capital among key US political actors. Some may question Unger’s position, but one cannot ignore the deftness with which the Saudis have gained entrée with major political figures along side their monumental investments. While Unger offers a rare account of this growing political relationship, bolstered by corroborative testimony, interviews with participants, and de-classified documents, one is still left with questions about the motivations behind the Saudi-Bush strategy. Here again, it is difficult to simplify these economic interests because of the copious causes and aspects that impact this dimension of the relationship.

On the Palestinian-Israeli issue, it is perhaps even more difficult to simplify the parties' interests. On the American side, the issue weighs heavily on the minds of politicians, especially during upcoming election years. On the other hand, the Saudis are in a unique quandary on the issue because their proximity to it. The Israeli army is
arguably one of the most well-equipped and advanced threats to the Saudi state. Aside from this strategic point, there is also a deep religious and cultural sensitivity to the conflict for all Arabs, especially those in Saudi Arabia (Schwartz, 2003). Deeper still, the issue has powerful ramifications because of its significance to terrorist organizations who cite US support for Israel as motivation for regional and global attacks on US interests (2003). These are only a few of the ways the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impacts the relationship, but they demonstrate again the composite nature of the US-Saudi interests.

While the relationship’s multi-dimensional and complex interests characterize its history and guiding influences, its need for secrecy is also of key importance. Because so many of the relationship’s interests facilitate each party’s national security, it is easy to understand the need for secrecy. It would have been unthinkable, for example, if the public were made aware of the US-Saudi involvement in the Afghan wars. For the same reasons that a military general will not announce his/her battle plans over CNN, many of the factors involved in the relationship cannot emerge because they would seriously jeopardize ongoing military efforts. If George W. Bush was correct when he said that, “a strategy by some would be to split the United States and Saudi Arabia,” when suggesting possible motives of the 9-11 hijackers, then we can understand that the relationship itself can become a military target (Bush, April 25, 2002). It is partially because of the relationship’s importance to vital US interests that it necessitates such a degree of secrecy among public officials. This is an especially salient factor for the upcoming analysis chapter for two reasons.

First, it justifies Wander’s (1984) argument that official foreign policy rhetoric “may not have any relation to the deliberation of policy” (339). Wander points out that
one cannot directly access the underlying factors behind official rhetoric. After all, when we consider the multi-dimensional and complex nature of this specific relationship together with the national security issues associated with it, we can be certain that the substance of official rhetoric is not likely to signal a full-blown explanation of the philosophical, strategic, or economic foundations of US-Saudi foreign policy. Although I agree with the notion that official statements may not say anything about the real interests involved, what they do not say can actually tell us something. For example, secrecy may characterize the interests of a relationship simply because no information is offered in a positive way. The distinct absence of information may actually constitute a revealing message in itself.

Secondly, the issue of secrecy opens many doors for rhetorical analysis. If official rhetoric about US-Saudi diplomacy tells us nothing about the 'true' nature of the relationship, then what does it tell us? As Wander (1984) points out, a complete account of foreign policy rhetoric must examine first, its "ceremonial nature," and second, its "function in domestic politics" before observing its squaring with history (340). Wander implies that foreign policy rhetoric is either ceremonial or aimed at domestic audiences more than it is intended to give a descriptive account of the policy or relationship in question. In the context of US-Saudi diplomacy, this idea remains salient insofar as it confirms what this chapter was intended to prove: the scope and interests underlying the relationship are far too complex, multi-dimensional, and often times unknown to allow for direct connections between official rhetoric and historical fact. Moreover, when we consider the necessity for secrecy in the relationship, this becomes even more evident.
Beyond secrecy, the numerous dimensions and complexities in this relationship help inform a proper rhetorical analysis by providing an overview of a long and complicated relationship that has all too often been simplified, promoted, or criticized in the mainstream media without acknowledgement of these many nuances and ambiguities. In the next chapter, these complexities and multiple dimensions become important issues as White House officials attempt to explain this relationship to the public amidst heated regional conflict in the West Bank, and growing public suspicion about the relationship among both Western and Arab audiences.
III Analysis

In this chapter, I will outline the emergence of two strategies—prophetic dualism, and domestication (Wander, 1984; Schiappa, 1989). Discussing the first of these, I will explain how White House rhetoric bolsters claims about the relationship's importance to world peace and the war on terror rhetoric by making use of a strategy Wander called prophetic dualism (1984). Secondly, I will outline the White House's use of another strategy that Schiappa called domestication (1989), in which several relational metaphors personify an image of a strong US-Saudi relationship. There I will show how official rhetoric described the content of the US-Saudi talks through a set of metaphors like friendship, family, and western hospitality, to overtly personify the relationship. However, to fully describe the rhetorical situation in which White House rhetoric appears, a brief summary of audience is in order.

One of the major issues facing US-Saudi diplomacy in the Spring of 2002 was the torrent of public criticism of the relationship, both in the US and within the Saudi Kingdom. With deeply interconnected business, political, financial, strategic, and military actors, the relationship has become a magnet for critics who perceive impropriety. Indeed, one of the major problems facing the administration is the task of justifying and promoting a relationship that by its very nature is shrouded in strict secrecy and protected by national security interests as well as those of military, industrial, and political elites, as explained in Chapter II. At the heart of most criticisms are the profitable relationships between the Saudi Royal family and many members of the Bush family. These connections exist by way of a revolving door between the private and public sectors of US policy, defense, and intelligence organizations, as outlined in
Chapter II. These critics highlight the multi-billion dollar investments between these two families through their political and business associates. Here arises the central strategic problem of communicating about a diplomatic relationship that encapsulates a wealth of criticism with both foreign and domestic audiences.

Several foreign and domestic audiences had an interest in President Bush’s April 25 address and in Subsequent White House addresses. On the domestic front, voters were still uncertain of the nature of the US-Saudi partnership. Public criticism in major US press outlets continued to assail the relationship on issues of Saudi anti-terror efforts, terrorist sponsorship, and the Kingdom’s ability to produce the 9-11 hijackers. Voters may have also been concerned about the price of oil at the time. Another domestic audience was also interested in this issue. Investors, especially those reluctantly clinging to their energy-sector holdings after the Enron escapade were equally sensitive about the volatility of energy prices in relation to the price of oil and petroleum; they were also concerned with the growing escalations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has frequently impacted the price of oil. Nonetheless, oil prices, regional stability, and terrorism weighed on the minds of domestic audiences.

In terms of international audiences, the Arab world as well as Japanese energy investors each had a stake in the meeting. Arabs continue to observe the tenor and tone of US-Saudi diplomacy. On one hand, many may object to an image of closeness or friendliness between President Bush and the Crown Prince Abdullah. It may signal the weakened stance of anti-westerners who denounce the US troop presence on Muslim holy land. Terrorists within Saudi Arabia claim an interest in the relationship for these central reasons, and were another key audience. On the other hand, many Arabs who opposed
Jewish expansion in Palestinian territory have favored the notion of closeness between the US and Saudi Arabia insofar as it signals the US’s willingness to appease Arab interests when balanced against the expansive and influential Jewish lobby. They may have also perceived increased legitimacy in an Arab nation who appeared to court western interests.

Outside the Arab world, Japan, which is Saudi Arabia’s other major energy importer, had a considerable stake in the US-Saudi talks. One could easily speculate that Japanese energy investors were curious about the tone and topic of the talks. If the US signaled a closer relationship with the Saudis, what might be the implications for Japanese interests? Israeli-Palestinian violence threatened further volatility in global energy markets, which explained one significant Japanese stake in US-Saudi diplomacy. In sum, international audiences were closely tuned to the tone and topic of the talks, looking for signals that might foreshadow developments in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, or any notable impacts on the price of Saudi oil. Arabs in particular were more concerned with the perceived closeness or friendliness between President Bush and the Crown Prince.

Responding to the unique sensitivities of both foreign and domestic audiences, White House officials discussed the US-Saudi talks through two distinctive strategies, the first of which appeared in an attempt to include the Saudis as our allies in the President’s ‘war on terror.’
Prophetic Dualism: Good vs. Evil, the War on Terror, and the Partnership for Peace

The President, during his speech on April 25th, 2002, described the US-Saudi relationship as a unique partnership, one that helped satisfy the US’s efforts toward peace in the Middle-East. He reassured audiences that the relationship was both important and strong, signaling a sense of near complacency while attempting to address the escalating violence between Palestinian and Israeli troops. In the wake of this conflict, the President focused on Saudi Arabia’s position as a potential peace partner, one that might help dissolve the spiking conflict to ensure a more stable region and assist the US’s war on terror. As explained here, the President’s descriptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict use a good-vs.-evil motif in which the Saudis battle terror by promoting a peaceful standoff. In doing so, White House rhetoric conformed to a strategy that Wander (1984) called Prophetic Dualism because the President created a good-vs.-evil battle via the war on terror, one in which the Saudis appeared as our partners for peace.

As the President and other White House spokespersons illustrated the importance of the US-Saudi partnership “to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East and the world,” they focused on Saudi cooperation on two pivotal issues: the war on terror and the Middle East peace process (April 25). To do so, however, they highlighted certain characters and nations as playing a good or evil role by making both implicit and explicit reference to the ‘axis of evil,’ and other motifs found in President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address. In this speech, the President described the world in terms of a good-vs.-evil motif, (which became an important fixture in the April 25, 2005, address).

A popular convention for framing international conflicts, the good vs. evil motif has served several administrations preceding George W. Bush’s, and has become a
frequent rhetorical tool for interpreting the complexities of foreign affairs. In the Crawford address, Bush, like his two predecessors, relied on renditions of the Cold War dichotomy between good and evil to dramatize the US’s war on terror. This description of the world’s geopolitical landscape in terms of moral right and universal good became a metaphorical stage upon which Bush told a dramatic narrative likened to the Cold War Drama outlined in Stuckey’s (1995) essay. In effect, this dramatic narrative used a metaphor through which the public gained an understanding of a complex conflict.

As an orientational metaphor, The Cold War Drama encapsulates national actors through dramatic narratives like those found in the prolific battle between Soviet Communism and Western Democracy that emerged during the Cold War. Cast as an ‘evil empire’ made most popular in President Reagan’s speeches, the Soviet Union was described as a great evil force in the world, one with which the US fought a noble and successful battle. It is a story that relies upon what Phillip Wander described as a prophetic dualism, or a dichotomous division of the world between forces of good and evil (1995; 1984). Although it may have served well during the proxy-wars between the West and Communism, this Manichean dualism between good and evil is more difficult to apply in recent times without some adaptation to historical circumstances. Namely, without a visible looming global superpower like the former Soviet Union, a more contemporary adaptation of this morally dichotomous worldview relies upon a new figure of evil, the “axis of evil,” which emerges in Bush’s post-9-11 rhetoric as he outlines the war on terror.

The most salient example of the ‘axis of evil’ metaphor first appeared in President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address. Following the traumatic events of 9-11, the
President outlined the US’s policies toward combating terror across the globe. In doing so, he made reference to several state-sponsors of terror as one cohesive group, the “axis of evil.” In the following passage from Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address (Jan. 29, 2002), we see the prolific introduction of this slogan into public dialogue.

States like these (North Korea, Iran, and Iraq), and their allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic. (Jan. 29, 2002)

Similar to the “evil empire” slogan attached to the former Soviet Union, the “axis of evil” sets the stage of global conflict in terms of good and evil, right and wrong. Here, the axis of evil encompasses several national actors like North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, but also includes their allies -- all of whom are “arming to threaten the peace of the world” (Jan. 29, 2002). The axis of evil brings together a list of the US’s enemies through an orientational metaphor that describes conflict in morally-laden terms (Stuckey, 1995). In classic fashion, the US is on the good side of a battle between good and evil -- a battle where the outcome is either a more peaceful world, or one in which our elusive enemies continue to “pose a grave and growing danger” (Jan. 29, 2002). These enemies are among “tens of thousands of ... dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes,” and are “spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning” (Jan. 29, 2002). It is in the context of these descriptions that the President’s “war on terror” takes shape as a moral imperative to protect the US and its allies from states “arming to threaten the peace of the world” (Jan. 29, 2002). It is in light of these fearsome descriptions that the White House rhetoric makes a distinct contrast when discussing Saudi relations. The construction of evil in the
post-9-11 narrative, involving characters described above in situations that pose ‘grave danger’ to the peaceful world, is an important literary component to the White House’s depiction of its relationship with Saudi Arabia, which is distinctively friendly, warm, and cordial, hence, a ‘partnership for peace.’

The narrative of the US’s post-9-11 experience in the war on terror allows the President and other officials to position the Saudis as our partners in the war on terror – more specifically, as our partners in the battle for world peace. Officials appeal to ideas like partnership and Arab multi-lateralism when they describe the Saudis and Crown Prince Abdallah as visionary leaders of world peace. Here, depictions of the Saudis as our partners for peace, allies against terrorism, and leaders in the ongoing Middle-East crises between Israel and Palestine display the ‘importance’ of the US-Saudi partnership.

When talking about the US-Saudi relationship, for example, Bush uses the interlocking terms of “partnership” and “peace.” His rhetoric associates these two terms with the Saudis to paint a positive image of their role in world affairs, which we see in the following excerpt from the April 25th Crawford address:

Our partnership is important to both our nations. And it is important to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East and the world. We discussed the critical importance of the war on terror. Much of our discussion centered on the Middle East, and how to defuse the current situation so we can get back on the path to peace.

This passage describes two items. It outlines both the substance and goals of the relationship. Substantively speaking, Washington and Riyadh are in a ‘partnership,’ the goal of which is ‘peace and stability in the Middle East, and the World.’ Of more concrete importance to the relationship are several items: the war on terror, defusing Arab-Israeli conflict, and more generally, the cause of peace in the world and within the
important' is a functional linkage between 'nations,' 'peace,' 'stability,' and the 'war on terror.' 'Important' becomes a vehicle of association; it associates the Saudis with peace, stability, and the war on terror. These associations also serve a second function as they help construct a metaphor for describing the relationship.

As an orientational metaphor, the war on terror re-situates the US-Saudi relationship by framing its goals in light of this global initiative, rather than the multitude of other overlapping interests between the parties, which become trivial details in light of the dramatic narrative into which the two nations are drawn. Outlining the implicit purpose of the meeting, Bush frames the relationship in terms of moral goals associated with stability and peace in the context of the war on terror, stating that “our discussion centered on the Middle East, and how to defuse the current situation [to] get back on the path to peace” (April 25). And while this conception of the war on terror helps situate the purpose of the meeting within moral framing, it also helps situate the Saudis as our partners for peace. The 'partnership for peace,' however, takes place within a larger regional context, which may allows the administration to emphasize a multi-lateral approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, another key topic of the address.

*Creating the Appearance of Leadership: The Role of Arab Multilateralism*

A regional multilateral approach to both the war on terror and the Middle-East peace process was another key concept that appeared in Bush’s address. A central component of the war on terror is the idea that the US’s regional allies will help quell conflict and stop the spread of terrorism. This notion of Arab multilateralism in which the Saudis become part of a larger effort toward world peace is one that also helps
magnify the Crown Prince's leadership. During his April 25th address, Bush dramatized this role, saying the Saudi Crown Prince "recognizes that America can't do it alone... it's going to require a unified effort," but he added that the Crown Prince is "a man with enormous influence in the Middle East ... I'm confident we can work together to achieve a peace" (April 25). Bush implies a nod toward Arab multilateralism, and positions the Crown Prince as a leader in that effort. Bush depicts their meeting as an attempt to "solidify" a multilateral effort toward peace; he added that "our discussion ... was how to get back on the path to peace" (April 25). He stressed the need for "withdrawal by Israel" and "for the Palestinian Authority to clamp down on terror" – two goals to which Arab leaders like Abdullah can pledge their support. More broadly, the role of a multilateral Arab effort helps position the Crown Prince, and the Saudis, as leaders in a regional effort to resolve Israeli-Palestinian standoffs and what Bush describes as Palestinian support for terrorism.

The White House's emphasis on Arab Multilateralism also allowed for more glowing descriptions of the Crown Prince. After all, ongoing peace efforts rely not only on a multi-lateral initiative, but more specifically upon a leader to initiate change. The multilateral approach to these issues creates a rhetorical opportunity for White House speechwriters to position the Saudis as stepping up to lead the charge. Inasmuch as their leadership supports an end to violence and state-sponsored terrorism, the Saudis continue to play a good role in the fight against evil encompassed in the 'axis of evil' metaphor discussed above. This notion of leadership extends into Bush’s descriptions of the Crown Prince as well.
Leadership functions in two ways in Bush’s rhetoric. As described above, Saudi leadership facilitates a multi-lateral solution to the war on terror and the “Path to Peace,” as Bush frequently refers to it (April 25). But the leadership theme also facilitates a dramatic role, into which Saudi Leader Abdullah can step. Bush explained how much he appreciated the Prince’s “vision for a peaceful and integrated Middle East,” and also how he “appreciated his leadership in helping rally the Arab world toward that vision” (April 25). Here, the idea of visionary leadership is closely connected with Bush’s hopes for a multi-lateral solution.

Conversely, the notion of Arab multilateralism positions the Crown Prince in the role of a visionary peace-maker, which fits nicely within the war on terror’s moralistic rhetoric. Bush’s positive characterizations of the Crown Prince, bolsters this impression. In a press conference following a major withdrawal of Israeli troops, Bush elaborated:

As we work to improve the security situation in the region, all of us must step up our efforts... I called Crown Prince Abdallah to thank him for his visit... The Crown Prince has offered a number of constructive ideas for making political progress between Israel and the Palestinians. We will continue to build on these ideas, as we move forward to fight terror and to promote peace in the Middle East. (April 28)

This passage best supports a perception of the Crown Prince as a diligent proponent of peace. His “constructive ideas for making political progress” appear to have facilitated, in part, the announced withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arafat’s compound, and also from Ramallah—a move the Israeli cabinet announced just hours before this address on April 28. As Bush stressed his desire to “continue to build on these ideas as we move forward” he seemed to imply that the Prince’s “constructive ideas” played and would continue to play a central role in the ongoing peace processes. Coming after a short
statement that was critical of Chairman Arafat (April 28), this statement paints a more glowing picture of the Crown Prince, simply by way of juxtaposition. But if the Crown Prince was worried about the public perceiving ambiguity in his role as a peace-proponent, he must have appreciated a speech given by White House National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice on April 29th, where she explained the role of Arab multilateralism and Saudi Leadership.

During a foreign policy address at Johns Hopkins University on April 29th, Dr. Rice was asked a question that President Bush had been asked just days earlier when prodded to comment on the “Abdallah Plan” for Middle-East Peace. In her response, she explained:

Every element of [the plan] may not be workable... But we need to keep our eye on the big picture here, and the promise of deeper Saudi engagement in the peace process would be a tremendous breakthrough for the entire process. The truth of the matter is that while we all focus very heavily on the Israeli-Palestinian piece of this, this, of course, takes place in a regional context... Israel has to have security with its neighbors; it has to have normal relations with its neighbors... It needs to move to normal relations with the other Arab states. And the Arab states, who also have a stake in the way that the Israeli-Palestinian issues are resolved, have to have a stake in the final outcome of those negotiations.

So we believe that what the Saudi initiative most represents is a new impetus to have Saudi engaged as Jordan and Egypt have been in bringing peace to the region as a whole. And so we have been extremely positive about it; we’ve embraced the concept in large parts... we think it’s a tremendously powerful tool and [an] extremely important step in this long-running conflict. (April 29)

Dr. Rice, a respected expert in Soviet affairs and balance of power issues, makes a well-developed case for Arab multilateralism. She stresses the importance of other regional “neighbors” in resolving this dispute. She also describes the conflict as a “process” rather than a specific negotiation, which helps her build-up the importance of regional actors like the Saudis. In sum, however, she paints a shining picture of the Crown Prince
as someone whose ideas for peace are having a catalytic impact upon the peace process – a "tremendous breakthrough," "a new impetus" for engagement, and ultimately, "a tremendously powerful tool and [an] important step in this long-running conflict" (April 29). Her descriptions help situate the Prince in a superlative light within the broader idea of Arab multilateralism with which she frames this issue.

Other officials also echoed the multilateral position. In his May 1 press briefing, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer also reiterated the role of Arab nations in Middle East peace during:

It’s always been the President’s view that the way to bring peace to the Middle East was to work with the Israelis, the Palestinian Authority, and the Arab nations, to find ways for all the parties to work together. And that involves multiple conversations on multiple levels... It’s always going to be interactive. (May 1, 2002)

This “interactive,” multilateral approach makes a good deal of sense; after all, one usually thinks of negotiations as quickly resolved with handshakes from the sides involved –essentially a facilitative bi-lateral event akin to the failed negotiations between Sharon and Arafat during the Clinton administration. Officials described the issue as a “long-running conflict,” and add although the Saudi plan is “tremendously powerful,” it is merely an “important step” in the larger process (Rice, April 29, 2002). Adding a sense of longevity to the peace effort, Dr. Rice reminded her audience that “we need to keep our eye on the big picture here, and the promise of deeper Saudi engagement in the peace process would be a tremendous breakthrough for the entire process” (April 29, 2002). Rice’s choice of the word “breakthrough” also echoes Bush’s April 25th statement, when he characterized the Crown Prince’s condolences toward Israel as a “breakthrough moment.”
Dr. Rice also expanded her conception of the conflict as a "process" in order to place value on both regional multilateralism, and hence on the Crown Prince's leadership therein (April 29, 2002). Emphasis on process meshes nicely with official discussion of Arab multi-lateralism and the value of "multiple level" discussions (April 29, 2002). The multi-party, process-oriented, coalition-building approach to conflict clearly favors those who can lead—presumably leaders of "tremendous influence" like Abdullah (Bush, April 25). It seems that the administration underscores their long-term hopes for peace by including other nations into the peace process. If this were simply a bi-lateral issue, then more emphasis could focus on the two state actors involved, but given this expanded framing, and Bush's de-valuing of Arafat's ability to aid the peace process (discussed below), Arab leaders like the Crown Prince are in an improved position to help facilitate the process.

As it relates to the White House's overall framing of the US-Saudi relationship, Dr. Rice's speech helped reinforce the moralistic framing of the relationship by emphasizing the important Saudi role in the Middle-East peace process. As echoed throughout other officials' statements, Rice's expanded conception of Arab multilateralism allows Saudi leadership to assume a pivotal role both within the Israeli-Palestinian resolution and with the broader war on terror as well. But this expanded conception of regional cooperation is not the only rationale that helps position the Crown Prince.
Highlighting Cooperation and Condemnation

What also improved the Crown Prince’s role in the war on terror narrative was his public condemnation of terror, which the White House continually emphasized in its statements. In his April 25th address, Bush stated he “appreciated the Crown Prince’s assurances that Saudi Arabia condemns terror.” Shortly afterwards, during a question-and-answer period, Bush elaborated further on Abdullah’s stance toward terror, and seemed to emphasize Abdallah’s rhetoric more frequently than his actions:

The Crown Prince has been very strong in condemning the murder of U.S. citizens. He’s been very strong about condemning those who committed those murders. And I appreciate that a lot. Right after 9/11, he was one of the strongest voices of condemnation. He understands how devious Osama bin Laden has been. He knows that—that anybody who—you know, that a strategy by some would be to split the United States and Saudi Arabia. It’s a strong and important friendship, and he knows that and I know that, and we’re not going to let that happen. So he’s been very strong in the condemnation of terror, for which I’m grateful. (April 25)

In Bush’s depiction, the Saudi Prince not only stands against terror publicly, but also has empathy for the US in the war on terror because his country was an indirect target in the attacks. As Bush somewhat reluctantly explained, the 9-11 planners, including Osama bin Laden, were attempting to sever the US-Saudi relationship, which would hurt both parties. By repositioning the Saudis as victims of this tragedy, Bush allows the public to view the Saudis not only as our friends by referring to the US-Saudi “friendship,” but also associates them as an ally in the fight against the axis of evil through their mutual suffering of 9-11. Again, helping the Saudis stand on our side in the metaphorical battle between forces of good and evil, the generic evidence of Saudi condemnation supports a conclusion that the Saudis are our allies in a global effort to fight terror.
Bush also supports claims about Saudi cooperation in other statements, which attempt to show specific evidence of US-Saudi aid in the war on terror. He referred to US-Saudi intelligence-sharing, Saudis “cutting off” terrorist money, and ongoing attention to security along the Yemeni border to “make sure that Yemen doesn’t become a haven for al Qaeda killers,” to demonstrate the President’s claims that the Saudis made several efforts to stabilize the region (April 25). By facilitating a more stable Middle-East, the Saudis help create a safer and more peaceful world, and become our valued partners for peace.

Unfortunately for reporters, the President never gives any specific examples beyond his general references. On this point, the issue of secrecy becomes very important in relation to White House rhetoric on the Saudis. As outlined in Chapter II, the US-Saudi relationship is based upon regional strategic interests that relate to the US’s vital economic and military interests. Especially when dealing with security issues, the President may lack the ability to provide specific evidence of bi-lateral cooperation on the terrorism issue in particular. On the other hand, this is one of the major criticisms of the Saudi regime – its instability and negligence in preventing terrorist recruitment and funding within its borders and beyond. Nonetheless, when interpreting official White House rhetoric on the issue of terrorism, the evidence one must analyze becomes murky with vague references like the ones mentioned above. In the end however, these statements help characterize the Crown Prince and the Saudis as allies in the morally dichotomous struggle between good and evil.

Within this epic struggle, a positive characterization of the Saudis and their Crown Prince relies upon three ideas that have been so far discussed. First, is the
“Abdullah plan,” or the Saudi peace plan, which demonstrates that the Saudis, Prince Abdullah specifically, have unique and proven ideas for peace. Second is the notion of Saudi leadership in the White House’s discussion of Arab Multilateralism. Third is the idea of Saudi cooperation in the war on terror, which arises in White House characterizations of the Saudi condemnations of terror. Taken together, these ideas help shape a polished narrative about the US-Saudi relationship that fits nicely into a contemporary rendition of the Cold War saga between good and evil.

These three ideas—the Saudi vision of peace, Saudi leadership in the Arab states, and Saudi condemnation of terror, all address Bush’s opening claims about the relationship and its “importance.” They also help support the Administration’s multilateral approach to the region. In sum, these three statements serve as evidence supporting Bush’s characterizations of the relationship. As evidence, these claims support a specific conclusion about the Saudis, as depicted in abstract argumentation below:

Premise: Saudis value peace
Sub-Claim1: Saudis want peace between Israel and Palestine
Evidence 1: Saudis lead Arab multi-lateral Middle-East peace talks
Sub-Claim2: Saudis want peace in the world
Evidence 2: Saudi leaders condemn terror
Warrant: Saudi partnership is “important to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle-East and the World” (April 25).

Although logically arranged here, these arguments are much more diffused as they appear in the texts of official rhetoric. Terms like “partnership,” “peace,” “leadership,” and “importance” cement the logical construction of ideas which frame our thoughts about the relationship. These word associate subjects like the US, the Crown Prince, and Arab states, with concepts that are central to Bush’s depictions of the relationship. His
statements rely on descriptions to frame the public’s impressions of various actors in this dramatic rendition. The word “importance” for example, does not say much by way of specifics; it simply attaches value to a certain subject, like “peace,” “partnership,” or the “war on terror,” and subsequently frames the Saudis and other Arab states as mutually invested in this effort.

When discussing US interests in the Middle-East conflict, Bush focuses on the “shared vision,” between the US and the Saudis, an idea that permeates his April 25 address. He explains the US’s position on the violent escalations in Rammallah and Bethlehem as a centerpiece of his policy toward the Middle-East, and frequently highlights the role of Arab states in resolving this conflict, namely, the visionary leadership of the Crown Prince Abdullah. He continually emphasizes this regional approach, as seen in his opening statement, when he states that “Our two nations share a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security,” adding that “all parties have responsibilities to help achieve that vision” (April 25). Here, he underlines the significance of the issue, and his belief in a regional approach that involves “all parties” – a nod to Arab nations in the region (April 25). He symbolically reiterates the idea of a US-Arab partnership as the fulcrum of current resolution efforts. In doing so, Bush seems to distinguish himself from Presidents like Clinton, who relied less upon Arab partners by maintaining a more direct, unilateral approach to the conflict, like the direct approach he took in the legendary talks that culminated in a rare hand-shake between the two Middle-East leaders. In contrast, Bush’s expanded approach limits perceptions of US interventionism and underscores the value of Arab leadership as a chief component to this multilateral regional effort.
The concept of Arab multilateralism then becomes an anchoring device for Arab leadership insofar as it sets-up the Crown Prince Abdallah in a role of peace-maker. Building on his descriptions of Arab multilateralism, Bush introduces several ideas that help construct a policy of US reliance on Arab states both to combat terrorism, and to mitigate the flaring tensions in the West Bank. This policy helps situate a more complementary rendition of the Saudis, as described here in an excerpt from Bush’s April 25th address:

We discussed the need for Arab states to condemn terror, to stop incitement of violence, and as part of a long-term peace, to accept Israel as a nation and a neighbor. We also agreed the world must join in offering humanitarian aid to the many innocent Palestinians who are suffering. I told the Crown Prince how much I appreciate his vision for a peaceful and integrated Middle East, and how I appreciated his leadership in helping rally the Arab world toward that vision. I also appreciated the Crown Prince’s assurance that Saudi Arabia condemns terror.

Bush paints a picture of US reliance on multiple Arab partners to facilitate its interests in the region. This multi-lateral approach positions the Crown Prince as its invaluable leader in “helping rally the Arab world toward that vision” (April 25). From this passage, one can see the complementary interaction between the notions of Arab multilateralism and Arab leadership. This interaction facilitates the re-positioning of the Crown Prince as an influential visionary of peace.

Indeed, Bush’s explanation above grooms Abdallah as a prominent US peace partner. During questioning at the April 25th address, Bush described the Crown Prince as “a man with enormous influence in the Middle East,” and added, “I respect that a lot, and I’m confident we can work together to achieve a peace.” After enhancing the Prince’s diplomatic credibility, Bush took several opportunities to spin a more positive framing of the Crown Prince, as in the following excerpt:
We’re interested in his advice, we’re interested in his counsel. We share a vision and I reminded him how much I appreciated his statement toward Israel. I thought that was a breakthrough moment... And then he went and sold that in Beirut, and I appreciated that as well

Here, Bush offers several examples to support a positive framing of the Prince’s role as a multi-lateral Arab partner. First, Bush creates the Abdallah-as-diplomatic-partner image, and expresses interest in his “advice,” and “counsel,” which denotes the role of an advisor or counselor, implying he is the US’s trusted friend. We typically assume an advisor or counselor is someone with some sort of technical, professional, or expertise-related credentials to deserve our trust and consideration. Secondly, Bush reiterates their shared commitment to peace in the West Bank to highlight the Prince’s “breakthrough” condolences towards Israel. Lastly, and most importantly, the President refers to Abdallah’s participation in a recent Arab Summit in Beirut as evidence to his strong leadership within Arab diplomatic circles. Referring to his “breakthrough” statement that he “went... and sold ... in Beirut,” he offers evidence to support his positive rendition of the Prince’s leadership. This leadership role not only builds a more positive public impression, but also demonstrates how this Arab partner facilitates US regional interests. Thus the Crown Prince is both a practical and attractive ally.

Again, by focusing on overlapping interests in Middle-East peace, officials describe the peace process in terms of goals and means. Our goal is a “lasting peace,” and dependable Arab leadership is a means to facilitate this goal. The Crown Prince plays a crucial role in that effort by “rallying the Arab world,” and more importantly Arab states, behind our shared cause. The idea of Arab leadership is difficult to support, however, because one must assume a link between symbolic and national leadership. By
describing the Prince as the a leader in rallying the “Arab World,” Bush implies a sense of symbolic leadership between Crown Prince Abdallah and the Arab world akin to the symbolic leadership of the Pope for practicing Catholics and the Catholic community at large. The veracity of Bush’s descriptions thus become difficult to assess without regional expertise. Although difficult to support, the President may not need to; his depictions are aimed at an audience of Americans, most of whom have little knowledge of Arab culture to which they could make a comparison. It is perhaps with this knowledge of audience that White House rhetoric develops a sharp contrast between Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat and Crown Prince Abdallah.

*Arab Leadership, Multilateralism, and the Vilification of Yasir Arafat*

To shine a more positive light on the Prince, the White House vilifies Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat in its public assessments of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. White House statements frequently describe Arafat as an obstacle to regional peace. In a May 1st conference Secretary Fleischer said that “The United States will continue to press the Palestinian Authority to fulfill their obligations to stop terrorism” (May 1). Implying the Palestinian leader's lapse in responsibility, Fleischer’s comment reflects the general tenor of White House rhetoric. During his April 25th address, Bush explained:

> The Palestinian Authority must do more to stop terror. Israel must finish its withdrawal, including resolution of standoff in Ramallah and Bethlehem, in a non-violent way. We discussed the need for Arab states to condemn terror, to stop incitement of violence, and as part of a long-term peace, accept Israel as a nation and a neighbor.

The statement about the “need for Arab states to condemn terror” implies that Arafat has not been doing this. By contrast, Bush applauds Saudi leadership just a moment later,
saying “I appreciated the Crown Prince’s assurances that Saudi Arabia condemns terror” (April 25). By positing the need for the Palestinian Authority to “clamp down on terror,” while simultaneously applauding the Saudis, Bush sets-up a kind of good-guy-versus-bad-guy scenario. The Saudis, good guys, are trying to facilitate peace, and we are working with them in that effort. Meanwhile, Arafat becomes the bad guy by appearing to halt or slow the process. Audiences may see Arafat as an obstacle to peace because they may perceive an unwillingness on his part to stop terrorism.

Moreover, in light of Bush’s multilateral framing of the peace process, he can reasonably urge Arab states like the Saudis to help prod the Palestinians in this direction. He acknowledges a very limited Israeli involvement, as though all the Israelis were trying to do is withdraw from Palestinian territory, and shifts much of the responsibility on Mr. Arafat, and upon Arab leadership as an impetus to a resolution. Again, this division between good and evil seems to eliminate many of the nuances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bush’s statement outlines the conflict through a simplistic problem-solution order. In the quote above, the Palestinian Authority (and Mr. Arafat by association) are the problem by not doing more to stop terror. For this statement to be true, we are to logically assume through logic that the “terror” to which Bush refers arises solely from Palestinian territory and is hence the sole responsibility of the Palestinian Authority.

After clarifying this as the central problem, Bush makes a generalized nod to the Israelis, and then calls upon Arab states to “condemn terror, to stop incitement of violence, and as part of a long term peace, accept Israel as a nation and a neighbor” (April 25). Here, he positions the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Arafat as the problem, and an emerging coalition of Arab states as a solution.
By implication, Bush also seems to define Palestinian aggression as terrorism, while Israeli force might not carry the same connotation. Secondly, he addresses the role of Arab states in reigning-in Arafat by way of implication. During questioning following his April 28th address, Bush offered the following statements in regards to the Palestinian leader.

Mr. Arafat must perform. Mr. Arafat must do his job. I’ve called upon Mr. Arafat in the past, I’ll continue to call upon Mr. Arafat to lead. The other day — somebody asked me one time, a while ago, they said, has he disappointed you, has he lost your respect. I said, well, he hasn’t earned my respect yet. He must earn my respect by leading. And there are a lot of people, a lot of Palestinians who are suffering, and now is the time for him to step up. (April 28)

Here, Bush seems to blame Arafat both for the violence against Israel, but also for the suffering of the Palestinians. Bush’s rhetoric seems to turn all sides against Arafat by painting him as an obstacle to peace, who must “step up” to “earn my respect” (April 28). The issue of respect that emerges in this quote adds a personal tone to the President’s characterizations of Arafat. Bush’s explanation of how Mr. Arafat “must earn my respect by leading” implies a personal issue between the two leaders (April 28).

Aside from implicitly laying blame, this statement suggests the Palestinian leader must measure up, or prove himself to Bush. It carries the message that Arafat is not stepping up, so to speak, in the peace process. Compared with the Saudi Crown Prince, whose role in the peace process is nearly fawned over by the administration, Arafat appears to drag his heels. It leads the reader to conclude that Middle-East conflict results from the failed leadership of Yasir Arafat, not from the myriad of circumstantial, cultural, and historical factors contributing to this epic conflict. In effect, Arafat’s vilification
serves makes him appear threatening both to the Israelis and to his own people. Hence, he stands figuratively on the other side of a line between good and evil.

As discussed above, Bush’s criticisms of the Palestinian Chairman serve a dramatic purpose as they personify Arafat in contrast to the Crown Prince. They may also reflect Bush’s true feelings on the matter, but Bush’s motives are difficult to access. Recently published accounts of White House dialogues do suggest that President Bush has strong feelings about Arafat’s role in the Middle East. In his recently published memoirs from office, former Press Secretary Ari Fleischer described a conversation that took place in the Spring of 2002 between President Bush and “a respected Arab leader,” whom Fleischer did not name (2005, 234).

“Arafat can’t get a damn thing done,” Bush complained. “Israel has created a martyr out of that guy.” The President thought it best if Arafat, who was now holed up and besieged in his mostly destroyed compound, was simply ignored for being a failed nonleader [sic] who incited terrorism... Bush was frustrated that Israel’s focus on Arafat made him a hero to the Palestinian people. The most influential Arab states that could help achieve peace, Bush thought, were Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt... Arafat and his immediate, corrupt circle were the real problems, Bush thought – not the Palestinian people and not Ariel Sharon. (2005, 234-235).

From public knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we can deduce that this meeting took place within weeks, if not days, of the White House addresses between April 25th and May 2nd. What is certain from the conversation, however, is a depiction of Bush’s attitude toward the conflict. It is clear that he views Arafat as an obstacle to his efforts in the region. It also appears that Bush perceived the situation in a dramatic frame, which he evinces in his criticism of Arafat’s “martyr” status; his statement that “Israel has made a martyr out of that guy” elucidates this point (2005, 234). Perhaps
Bush reasoned that if one outcome of the conflict was to create a martyr out of Arafat, then the cycle would continue without any incentive for the parties to change behavior.

In sum, the White House reiterates several points when supporting its claims about the importance of US-Saudi relations. While officials attempt to put a positive spin on Saudi cooperation in the war on terror, they more frequently emphasize the Crown Prince’s visionary leadership toward a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian stand-offs. White House rhetoric constructs the idea of Abdallah’s visionary leadership by stressing a multilateral approach to the conflict that will necessitate the initiative from leaders like Abdallah. This regional approach also identifies with other leaders, namely Yasir Arafat, about whom Bush is particularly critical. By way of contrast, Bush’s criticisms of Arafat merely help bolster a more polished image of the Saudi Crown Prince.

The administration also positions the Saudis within the larger historical context of the war on terror, and in doing so, depicts their role as ‘good-guys’ in the battle against the ‘axis of evil.’ This characterization becomes an important theme in a new rendition of the Cold War drama. As partners for peace, the Saudis take on a dramatic role as both peace makers, and also as important US allies in the war on terror. In much the same way as they were crucial in the US’s clandestine fight against the Soviets, described in Chapter II, the Saudis appeared to aid the US in a new proxy-war against worldwide terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda.
Relational Metaphors and the Rhetoric of Domestication

In supporting claims about the strength of the US-Saudi partnership, White House officials used a strategy of domestication (Schiappa, 1989) to frame the relationship in terms that were easily-digestible for a wide range of public audiences. As Schiappa described, domestication strategies use "friendly metaphors drawn from ordinary language to name otherwise objectionable nuclear weapons, [and] strategy" (1989, 255).

By way of adaptation, the domestication strategy appears when White House officials describe both the content and purposes of the April 25th meeting through relationship metaphors that stress personal bonding, intimate conversations, and private interactions. Below, I will outline the varied appearances of this technique. Attempting to paint a palatable image of the US-Saudi partnership in the most positive light possible, White House rhetoric employs three different metaphors to personify the relationship: mutual appreciation, shared respect, and personal bonding.

Mutual appreciation is a recurring theme used to characterize the content of the leaders' discussions. Bush "appreciated the Crown Prince’s assurances...;" he "told the Crown Prince how much [he] appreciate[s] his vision," and also that he appreciated the Crown Prince’s promise that "they will not use oil as a weapon" (April 25).

Appreciation, along with other adjectives, describes the relationship in very friendly terms, but certainly not ordinary. For example, Bush frequently refers to the "shared vision" between the two countries; hardly a normal friendship, these two parties seem to become visionaries for peace rather than normal pals at the bowling alley (April 25, April 28). As Bush describes in his April 25th address, “our two nations share a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine,” and “there’s a shared vision... we must consult with our
friends.” This frequently recurring idea of visionary leadership helps frame the relationship as a partnership for peace. It helps bolster a moralistic impression of the purpose and tone of the parties’ interactions. It appears that at the heart of the US-Saudi relationship is a shared vision for peace, which brings them together to forge a strong bond and move forward with the peace process.

In Bush’s April 25th address, he explains that the Crawford Ranch is “a place that is very special for me, and a place where I welcome special guests to our country.” This idea of Saudi “specialness” lays the foundation for a series of depictions designed to elevate the status of the Saudis as unique, distinctive, and inimitable diplomatic partners—supporting Bush’s claims about the relationship’s strength and importance. First, the idea that the Saudis are our partners in peace implies their leadership in ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, where the Crown Prince is “a man with enormous influence in the Middle East” (April 25).

There are also other descriptions that protect the Saudis from criticism by elevating the perceived status of the Saudi partnership with reference to 9-11. For example, in a response to a question about the Saudis involved in the 9-11 attacks, Bush explained in his April 25th address that “a strategy by some would be to split the United States and Saudi Arabia,” which nods to an idea that has been developed in other White House statements. As the argument goes, the fifteen hijackers who were allegedly of Saudi nationality were intentionally recruited by al-Qaeda to sever the ties between the west and the Holy Kingdom. In such a scenario, an angered American public would turn immediately to the Saudis when laying the blame for 9-11. By setting up the relationship for failure and public criticism, Osama bin Laden and the 9-11 hijackers were aiming for
a target that went far beyond the four buildings assaulted in the attacks; they were trying
to destroy the US’s key oil source and potentially bring down the Saudi regime in the
process (Unger, 2004; Coll, 2004). This strategy might force the removal of US troops
from what Arabs view as the Islamic nation’s epicenter via Medina and Mecca. In this
context, a portrait of the Saudis as victims of 9-11 has three immediate rhetorical
functions that help deflect public criticism from the US-Saudi relationship.

First, through the Saudi-as-victim depiction, Bush attempts to reframe public
perception of Saudi Arabia in light of a good-vs.-evil dualism. Here, Bush’s framing of
9-11 helps support the general notion that the Saudis are victims of 9-11, and hence, on
the ‘good’ side of the war against terror, i.e. evil. If the 9-11 hijacklers were intentionally
trying to sever the ties between the US and the Saudis, then any criticism directed at the
Saudis seems misplaced, for the Saudis were victims of 9-11 just like their American
counterparts. The dualism between good and evil helps categorize the ‘good’ from the
‘bad,’ and helps position the Saudis the former. This is one example of how the dualistic
framing of the war on terror helps shield the Saudis from criticism. It also helps
domesticate the Saudis insofar as it describes them in a simplistic narrative about good
and evil, in which they become easily-identifiable characters fighting against the elusive
threat of terrorism.

Second, it deflects criticism by positioning the Saudis’ critics as aligning
themselves with the enemy. As many critics pointed to the Saudi’s role in funding
terrorism, their inability to control terrorist groups within the country, and the generally
unstable nature of their domestic rule, criticisms now seem misinformed or short-sighted.
For example, Bush’s reiteration of the idea that 9-11 was intended to sever the US-Saudi
connection implies that those who criticize the relationship are doing exactly what the terrorists wanted. Indeed, one could argue that Osama bin Laden, given his proximity to the royal family, his deep connections with both Saudi and US intelligence operations, and his growing animosity toward the west, would make an ideal candidate to draw criticism on the Saudis. It would seem that any attempt by the US to press the Saudis on key issues like terror funding and the incubation of radical Islam are illogical because they serve the enemy’s interests. This notion that the Saudis suffered from 9-11 along side the US preserves and heightens perceptions of the Saudi partnership by reframing the Saudis in relation to 9-11 instead of other, more complicated, issues. This idea also deflects key criticisms of the Saudi role in producing 15 of the 19 hijackers and their support for al-Qaeda, in addition to their influential relationship with Wahhabi Islam, Osama bin Laden, and the Bin Laden family, as discussed in Chapter II. Similarly, the Saudi-as-victim idea also helps domesticate the Saudis because they become ‘just like us,’ wounded on the battlefield of good and evil.

Aside from preserving the image of Saudi “specialness” or inimitability, other descriptions emphasize the mutual respect between the parties. When discussing the content of the discussions, Bush frequently uses the term “respect,” most frequently in his April 25th address. During the same address, the question of whether the Saudis will use the “oil weapon” emerged, to which Bush acknowledged that “Saudi Arabia made it clear, and has made it clear publicly, that they will not use oil as a weapon. And I appreciate that, respect that, and expect that to be the case.” Throughout his statements, as well as in subsequent White House responses, the word “respect” reappears describing the respect the parties have for each other, the mutual respect for the parties, visions of
peace, and so forth. Respect operates as an adjective with subjects tied to the relationship—visions, positions, views, and the like. Again, the primary function of this word is to characterize a diplomatic relationship as if it were a warm friendship.

Another key theme in White House statements is personal bonding, which personifies the relationship. Terms like partnership, friendship, respect, understanding, and appreciation, all support a more pervasive theme of personal bonding, which Bush relies upon when describing his interactions with the Crown Prince. He uses these themes to characterize or personify the relationship through simplistic folksy narratives. During his questioning, Bush provides two narratives that very clearly elucidate the bonding theme. The first comes after the April 25th address, when Bush responds to a reporter’s question about his ability to smooth over the Arab leader after Bush’s description of Ariel Sharon as a “man of peace” (April 25, 2002)

Bush: Well, first of all, one of the really positive things out of this meeting was the fact that the Crown Prince and I established a strong personal bond. We spent a lot of time alone, discussing our respective visions, talking about our families. I was most interested in learning about how he thought about things. I’m convinced that the stronger our personal bond is, the more likely it is relations between our country will be strong... (April 25, 2002)

This passage directly frames the relationship as a personal friendship. Of special importance is the way Bush describes the content of their relationship. They talked about what he vaguely describes as “respective visions,” and about their families (April 25). Bush’s comment that he is “interested” in the Crown Prince’s thoughts says even less about the true substance of their several-hour meeting (April 25). As Bush’s account suggests, the two world leaders had an open conversation about their families and views on the world. This account, however, makes a bold move as it positions a personal relationship ahead of an official one. Bush’s statement toward the end of this passage
balances a diplomatic relationship with a personal friendship. He equates a strong personal bond with a strong bi-lateral relationship, as if diplomacy lies in becoming best friends with your counterpart before beginning hard-nosed, interest-based conversations. Here, descriptions of the relationship’s content and purpose converge on the idea that personal relationships precede official duties. If the President’s friendship with a Saudi royal is productive, then the relationship between our two countries will prosper as well. It seems that what is good for George W. Bush is also good for America.

In another response, Bush goes further in-depth about his interactions with the Crown Prince. Near the end of the April 25th address, Bush responded to a question about his engagement with Arab nations in the following narrative:

[The meeting] went on quite a while because there was a lot to discuss, plus, I want you to know, I had the honor of showing him my ranch. He’s a man who’s got a farm and he understands the land, and I really took great delight in being able to drive him around in a pickup truck and showing [sic] him the trees and my favorite spots. And we saw a wild turkey, which was good. But we had a very good discussion, and I’m honored he came to visit. (April 25)

Here we see a story of two men, going for a drive in a pickup truck on a ranch. Their friendship seems consecrated by this intimate act of male bonding. Apparently, Bush took the Crown Prince for a drive to show him around, and point out some of his “favorite spots.” In terms of its ceremonial appeal, the narrative Bush tells above presents a westernized version of diplomatic formality; it depicts the relationship not just as an intimate friendship, but as a family affair. The ranch location is important in facilitating this appearance because, as opposed to the White House, Camp David, or other diplomatic forums, the ranch is owned by the Bush family, not the US government. As such, the imagery of this backdrop reinforces the personal dimension of the relationship.
There is also a sense of male bonding that emerges in the pickup-truck narrative. When Bush explained during the April 25th address that "He's a man who's got a farm and he understands the land, and I really took great delight in being able to drive him around in a pickup truck," he is telling a story about male bonding. The two apparently had a long drive and a good conversation, which describes a scene of men bonding on a western landscape, commenting on wild turkeys and discussing their views on the world. This fatherly escapade is reminiscent also of a familiar event many would place within the context of a story about family. Two paternal father figures get away from the house to talk business and to bond as men. Here, family rhetoric becomes clearer in Bush's narrative where descriptions of a friendly sight-seeing tour of the family ranch help reinforce a familial tone. The context of the Bush's family ranch paints a picture akin to a family visit, or a neighbor stopping by on a Saturday afternoon. As opposed to a formal negotiation, intense trade talks, or other diplomatic functions, the two simply had a "visit." According to Bush, the two had a conversation about his favorite locations, the lay of the land, and other pleasant notables like a wild turkey. His narrations of the day's events paint a very folksy, neighborly visit occurring before a backdrop of a Texas family ranch. In effect, Bush's narration of the events paints a relatable picture of a diplomatic meeting. He tells a story about family, friendship, and community in the language of western narratives and folklore. Bush's ceremonial descriptions dovetail with the speech's central thesis and a crucial rhetorical premise: the US-Saudi relationship is important and strong. In terms of tone and content, this relationship is framed as part friendship, part family relation, and part diplomatic partnership. The ceremony takes on a warm, friendly, feel, with words like "special," "cordial," and "honor," describing the
meeting and its location; the family ranch is “very special for me,” “a place where I welcome special guests to our country” (April 25).

The setting of the address also enriches these descriptions. As guests to a reception at the President’s home in Texas, the Saudis appear to hold pre-imminent diplomatic status. As opposed to the White House, the Saudi Embassy in Washington D.C., or the US Embassy in Riyadh, the Crawford Ranch appears more personal, friendly, and familial as a diplomatic venue. It suggests the Saudis are very special and deserving of the President’s exclusive attention. As the descriptive context of the address’ metaphorical appeals, the ranch becomes background as descriptions of the relationship, its participants, and their interactions take the foreground.

Western values also play a central role in the official portrait of the relationship. By appealing to western notions of family hospitality, the narratives of the diplomatic visit present a palatable picture of the relationship. By focusing on ceremonial honors, warm discussions, and friendly pickup truck drives, the narratives found in White House statements create an impression of the relationship as being removed from its interest-based foundations. Rhetorically, this narrative conceives of a diplomatic relationship as a friendship, family visit, or a polite neighborly discussion. It indicates little if anything about the true substance of the conversation; rather, it distills the meeting into an easily understood metaphor: a family visit. As with any narrative, Bush’s creates a warm friendly tone in his descriptions of the form and content of the discussions. Highlighting such ceremonial details, official rhetoric substitutes descriptive relational metaphors in place of a more pragmatic outline of the relationship’s real interests.
By simplifying the relationship into a descriptive metaphor, Bush’s narratives function as a *simplification* mechanism akin to Schiappa’s *domestication* and *bureaucratization* motifs (1989). Drawing upon a friendly metaphor from ordinary language (1989), the Crawford narrative simplifies an otherwise complex relationship into something easily-understood. The domestication strategy employed in official rhetoric constructs a descriptive narrative of the relationship that emphasizes mutual appreciation, shared respect, and personal bonding to create a set of relational metaphors. In its content, the relationship takes on a friendly, familial, and personal tone while demonstrating to the audience the ‘strength’ of the partnership. A high-level meeting between two diplomatic partners becomes a friendly visit between family friends. Hard-headed negotiations become a drive across the ranch to see a wild turkey. When one considers the strategic dimensions of the US-Saudi partnership, this narrative seems detached from reality. In this sense, the western narrative “sanitizes” the relationship in a way that distances the public from it (1989). By developing a mythical re-creation of a diplomatic partnership, Bush’s address removes the relationship from public criticism by making only descriptive appeals and depicting the details of a high-level meeting between two major world powers with themes like family, friendship, and personal bonding. As with any metaphorical description, the ties between concrete or abstract descriptions and the collection of values they symbolize is where the persuasive effect takes its course.
IV Discussion

After developing both the historical overview and rhetorical analysis in the two preceding chapters, this Chapter will discuss how previous chapters addressed this study’s first and second formal research questions. Answering RQ1, I will discuss how official rhetoric reframes the public’s understanding of the US-Saudi partnership. Considering the conclusions found in the history chapter, we see the real nature of the US-Saudi partnership has far more to do with complex economic and security issues than official rhetoric suggested. Here, I argue that the White House’s use of morally-dichotomous good-vs.-evil framing, together with its emphasis on domestication techniques clouds the underlying issues and interests that drive the relationship in favor of a more passable and simplistic narrative about war and peace.

Secondly, in response to RQ2, the analysis chapter reveals innovative adaptations of two rhetorical strategies: prophetic dualism (Wander, 1984) and domestication as per Schiappa (1989). I will first discuss how the White House’s adaptation of prophetic dualism re-configures conceptions of the Cold War drama as per Stuckey (1995). Specifically, I will first argue that a one-sided construction of the prophetic dualism allows official rhetoric to echo the Cold War drama within the dichotomous moral framing of the ‘War on Terror.’ Then, I will outline how the White House’s use of descriptive relational metaphors constitutes a new innovation in domestication strategy, urging a need for scholars to expand Schiappa’s (1989) conception of domestication to include issues of personification.
History and its Double

In response to RQ1, the historical overview and analysis chapters tell us much about the underlying interests of the US-Saudi partnership as well as how White House rhetoric portrays these interests. Official rhetoric clouds the true nature of the US-Saudi partnership by focusing on a morally-dichotomous rendition of the relationship that fails to convey any sense of moral ambiguity or realism in terms of the relationship’s underlying interests.

As outlined in the history chapter, the foundations of the US-Saudi partnership have always centered on economic and strategic interests that are complex and multi-dimensional. For example, the economic interests in the relationship were far from simple. While the US benefited from Saudi oil exports as a primary source of crude, it also experienced a wave of investment in US markets from the estimated $840 billion of Saudi royal spending (Unger, 2004). On the other hand, the Saudi Kingdom received a rapid infusion of infrastructure, technology, and military development and training from the US. In terms of economic interests alone, the relationship encompasses multiple dimensions each with its own layers of interested parties, companies, government officials, and so on.

The military component of the relationship, as discussed in Chapter II, is equally complex and multi-faceted. Chapter II discussed how the Saudis became increasingly involved in US clandestine military operations in the Middle-East and Central Asia, primarily to combat the spread of communism and balance regional threats such as Iran’s Ayatolla or Iraq’s Hussein. But they also became an informal outpost and central command facility for US troops; from there, US operations during the first Gulf War
would target Iraqi forces from holy Muslim soil. The Saudis also helped recruit a
Muslim army to fight the soviets in Afghanistan, where they enlisted the help of Saudi
Billionare Osama bin Laden, who later lead a team of hijackers to attack the US on 9-11.
These are just three examples of the different military dimensions of the relationship,
each with its own complexities and dynamics.

If anything, these issues—economic and strategic, entail multi-dimensional
interests, complexities within each of those interests, and lastly, a pronounced need for
secrecy due to the sensitive nature of each interest. The rhetorical presentation of this
relationship however, greatly avoids any mention of these nuances, ambiguities, and
underlying interests. In fact, if official rhetoric serves any function in relation to the
actual history of US-Saudi diplomacy, it clouds the ‘real’ nature of the relationship in
exchange for a much more palatable and simplistic rendition.

White House rhetoric, in its adaptations of prophetic dualism and domestication,
obscures important details about the US-Saudi relationship in three different ways. First,
it distorts the underlying interests that drive the partnership. After the 2002 Crawford
meeting, official rhetoric focused on the war on terror and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian
conflicts. Bush described the relationship in terms of its importance to peace in the world
and in the Middle East (April 25), and explained the strength of the relationship in terms
of the warm and personable interactions between President Bush and the Crown Prince
Abdullah. By describing the partnership in terms of its importance to the world and the
Middle-East, Bush reframed the central issues of the partnership in accordance with a
narrow interpretation that fit within the ‘war on terror,’ good vs. evil narrative. It painted
a sterling picture of the Saudis while masking many unresolved public criticisms of the relationship.

In contrast, if officials framed the relationship in terms of its importance to each party, then Middle-East peace and the War on Terror would pale in comparison to the current price of oil, the (then imminent) invasion of Iraq, and other salient interests. But because Bush’s framing supports a specific narrative that emphasizes the war on terror and the ongoing conflict in the West Bank, official accounts of mutual interests like oil supply and regional security are but tertiary concerns within a moralistic narrative about a battle between good and evil.

Secondly, official rhetoric removes critical issues of public concern from the scope of public debate. Namely, latent and growing threats to US national security may originate from within the Saudi state. Yet, when questioned about these threats, officials reiterate essentially narrative responses that only reinforce the good vs. evil framing of the war on terror and subsequently position the Saudis as helping rather than harming this effort. After Bush’s April 25 address (2002), he gave the following response to question about Saudi support for terrorism:

[Reporter]:… You said that the Crown Prince is against terror… Do you believe the leadership is doing enough to deal with their own problems with terrorism that comes out of their own country? Fifteen of the 19 hijackers—
[Bush]: Yes, I—the Crown Prince has been very strong in condemning the murder of US citizens. He’s been very strong about condemning those who committed those murders. … Right after 9/11, he was one of the strongest voices of condemnation. He understands how devious Osama bin Laden has been…

This passage responds to the issue of Saudi terrorism by simply reiterating the ‘peace maker’ narrative attached to the Crown Prince. Emphasizing Abdullah’s condemnation of terror, Bush implies that because the Crown Prince denounces terror publicly, that 1)
he can prevent it from occurring in his regime, and 2) he receives support in this effort from the rest of Saudi leaders. The truth of Saudi stability is quite different than it appears here. The public is left to assume that, like the President of the United States, the de-facto ruler of Saudi Arabia enjoys the same latitude of influence over public policy and state administration when this is far from the truth.

As outlined by Clarke (2004), Crile (2003), Coll (2004), and Schwartz (2003), the Saudi regime is greatly divided between pro- and anti-western advocates. Some, like Saudi Ambassador to the US and long-time Bush associate Prince Bandar bin Sultan, or Crown Prince Abdullah, enjoy warm and positive relations with the west. Others in the family however denounce US customs, policy, and culture while openly admiring figures like Osama bin Laden and supporting religious groups closely associated with Muslim terrorist groups like al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Muslim Brotherhood, and others (Baer, 2003; Clarke, 2004; Schwartz, 2003). In short, there is a great divide in terms of US support within the Saudi regime, and this division is not apparent in any of the White House’s statements about Saudi leadership, cooperation in the war on terror, or any other issue related to the relationship in even the most general terms. The administration’s descriptive account of this partnership obscures the conflicts within Saudi Arabia over their relationship with the US.

Third, and most important, is the impact of value-oriented rhetorical strategies that obscure moral ambiguity. Domestication and prophetic dualism, as outlined in the literature review and textual analysis sections, are collections of appeals that describe the US-Saudi partnership through value-oriented metaphors. The one-sided construction of prophetic dualism emphasizes the positive or ‘good’ in the relationship and puts a moral
spin on the relationship. As we see from the history chapter, the underlying interests of the partnership are encumbered with moral ambiguity that is difficult to resolve. The case of Osama bin Laden is a most salient example of this ambiguity.

On the one hand, bin Laden served a valuable role in the clandestine war against the Soviets. On the other hand, he was the alleged mastermind behind the events of 9-11 and is now the US’s most wanted fugitive (Coll, 2004). This is one of many cases that show the murky moral substance of the relationship. We see similar examples in the cases of the Iran-Iraq war, the political and financial relationships between the Bushes and the Saudi royal family, and most recently in the issue of Saudi cooperation in the war on terror. As it relates to the rhetorical strategies employed by White House officials, the ‘real’ nature of US-Saudi diplomacy entails complexities, nuances, overlapping interests, secrecy, and moral ambiguity that cannot receive adequate development in the simplistic narratives used by public officials to support US policy toward Saudi Arabia. In short, White House rhetoric obscures much of the true substance of the relationship in favor of a more simplistic, palatable account.

*Prophetic Dualism and the War on Terror: Re-Telling the Cold War Drama*

With reference to RQ2, White House rhetoric adapted two rhetorical strategies. The first is Wander’s (1984) prophetic dualism, which relies upon a moral dichotomy between good and evil, right and wrong, etc. As one notices from the analysis chapter, much of the White House’s rhetoric focuses on constructing the positive or good side of this dichotomy. Although other official rhetoric mentions America’s fight against terrorism, evildoers, murderers and the like, in the context of US-Saudi relations, it more
frequently frames these issues in terms of ‘the good’—peace, partnership, vision, leadership, and others. Whether talking about world peace, middle-east peace, visionary leadership, or Arab multilateralism, the White House allocates most of its rhetorical resources to constructing notions of these ‘goods.’ In doing so, officials take every effort to develop narratives and build ideas about good people (Bush and the Crown Prince, the US and the Saudis, etc.) doing good things—partners for peace, partners against terrorism, and others.

This emphasis on the ‘good’ is a noteworthy adaptation for two reasons. First, it signals the lasting reverberation of the White House’s moralistic framing following 9-11. As outlined by Bostdorff (2003), George Bush’s rhetoric after 9-11 appealed to the notion of America’s “national covenant,” a strategy that was based on a puritanical moral framing of the 9-11 attacks which posited a good vs. evil ‘crusade’ against ‘evildoers’ (293). Eventually, when Bush gave his State of the Union address, just months after the attacks, his introduction of the ‘axis of evil’ metaphor propelled the use of moral framing in descriptions of international conflict and foreign policy. As discussed in the analysis chapter, Bush’s introduction of the ‘Axis of Evil’ signaled a new rendition of the Cold War drama that encapsulated national actors in a good vs. evil struggle against ruthless murders intending imminent harm against the free world (Bush, Jan. 29, 2002). As it relates to White House rhetoric after the Crawford meeting, Bush’s moral framing of 9-11 provided an implicit rhetorical backdrop that allowed official rhetoric to construct appeals with reference to a pre-established evil. Whereas some strategies might contain appeals to both good and evil, the latter theme had already been established in the President’s 2002 state of the Union Address.
With the 'evil' already established, officials focused on creating the other half of the dualism. Within an isolated period of time, the White House's focus on constructing the 'good' side of this dualism frames a number of isolated issues like the US-Saudi relationship, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Arab multilateralism in light of the broader war on terror. The US-Saudi partnership, for example, seems to have more to do with the crusade against terrorism than it does with any of the underlying issues that have guided the relationship since its founding. The convenience of the war on terror lies in its ability to frame a number of unrelated foreign policy issues under a pre-established rhetoric of good vs. evil. While this framing helps facilitate a one-sided construction of Wander's prophetic dualism (1984), it also helps officials re-cast a Cold War narrative within a new historical context.

The second hallmark of official rhetoric appears in the retelling of Stuckey's (1995) Cold War drama within a new and entirely different geopolitical landscape where the US's enemies have been framed under a new battle against global terror. One of the most salient features of the Cold War drama is that it was a somewhat accurate picture of the Cold War relations between two major world powers, the US and the Soviet Union. We could understand how it was indeed a 'cold' war; we fought invisible enemies within the contexts of deniable clandestine operations at the same time with a clear and identifiable enemy. The US and Soviets avoided firing missiles at one another, yet the US launched the CIA's largest and most successful clandestine proxy war of the 20th century in areas like Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America (Crile, 2003, ix-x; Croll, 2004). Battles were largely invisible to the public; they resulted in covert assassinations, kidnappings, treason, defection, and deniable US support for guerilla
warfare in regional proxy battles like those in Afghanistan, which contributed—some say lead, to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union (Crile, 2003; Coll, 2004). Perhaps we called it the Cold War because if it ever became “hot,” the world would potentially crumble in the wake of full-scale nuclear engagement. In the end, the US was fighting a clearly defined state actor.

On the other hand, the war on terror is very much a “hot” war metaphorically speaking. In addition to silent clandestine victories in intelligence gathering, mole-finding, and other cloak-and-dagger activities, the war on terror by contrast produces very visible results. We see evidence of captured al-Qaeda operatives, invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the daily death tolls of both US and enemy combatants in the headlines of the New York Times. Although the public can see an identifiable enemy and tangible battles, they cannot attach an army to a particular national actor. While certain states sponsor terrorism, one particular state does not encompass the entire threat. The President’s ‘Axis of Evil,’ for example, mentions three State actors—Iran, Iraq, and North Korea—but even without the influence of these states, terrorists would still enjoy a wide range of support in the Arab world (Schwartz, 2003; Clarke, 2004).

Unlike the Cold War, the War on Terror adds ambiguity to the notion of a State threat to national security, and more deeply undermines the notion of a ‘Cold’ war where the US was fighting an easily identifiable state threat. Despite the historical inconsistencies between the Cold War and the War on Terror metaphors, official rhetoric effectively recasts the narrative of an old struggle to meet new international circumstances. The good vs. evil framing via prophetic dualism emerges as the most
prominent frame for the US's war on terror, and hence, describes several isolated foreign policy issues like the US-Saudi partnership, Middle-East peace, and others.

The fact that White House rhetoric pays such great attention to constructing Wander’s (1984) prophetic dualism indicates this strategy’s versatility in repositioning foreign policy issues in respect to particular historical developments. For example, by emphasizing the importance of US-Saudi relations to the cause of world peace and Middle-East peace, the role of Arab multi-lateralism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or the need for our best allies to publicly condemn terrorism, the White House uses particular historical developments to contrast its construction of ‘the good’ in light of ‘the bad.’ The use of this moral framing, however, seems to suggest that White House officials may view their foreign policy decisions through a similar moral lens.

To adapt their rhetorical strategies, officials rely upon this moral framework provided by the ‘Axis of Evil,’ and the descriptions of the terrorist threat found in the President’s 2000 State of the Union address to provide background for a ‘good’ effort against evil. The frequent use of this morally dichotomous framing indicates that morality is, to some extent, a foundational consideration for this Administration’s foreign policy decision-making. In her address at Johns Hopkins University, shortly after the Crawford address, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice explained the Administration’s reliance upon moral rationale in its foreign policy decisions:

America... will use [its] influence to favor freedom. There are right and wrong choices and right and wrong acts. And governments are making them every day for their own people and for the people of the world. We can never let the intricacies of cloistered debate – with its many hues of gray and nuance – obscure the need to speak and act with moral clarity. We must recognize that some states or leaders will choose wrongly. We must recognize that truly evil regimes will never be reformed...
Nations must decide which side they are on in the fault line that divides civilization from terror. They must decide whether to embrace the paradigm of progress: democracy and freedom and human rights, and clean limited government. (April 29, 2002)

Rice speaks about a division between a civilized world and a terrorized one; she speaks of right and wrong, good and evil, and implies a with-us-or-against-us view of international relations. She describes the importance of moral clarity and a reminder that officials should “never let the intricacies of cloistered debate—with its many hues of gray and nuance—obscure” this importance (April 29, 2002). While her moral vision is quite explicit, the more pertinent issue is the degree to which this moral framing influences her, and other White House decision makers’, foreign policy decisions.

Later, Rice addressed this issue. When a reporter questioned the White House’s reliance on moral dichotomies to explain international policy, they pointed out, “you [Rice] use a lot of moral dichotomies—there’s a fault line, there’s the good, the evil... but it seems that the realities of foreign policy are much more complicated,” and he gave an example of this complication by stating that, “America has to engage with some regimes that are either anti-democratic, like Saudi Arabia, or with dubious moral records, [like] Israel” (April 29, 2002). After explaining the statement, the reporter asked, do “you feel that this moral rhetoric... create[s] a perception of hypocrisy and threatens America’s credibility?” (April 29). To this pointed question, Rice offered a response that says much about the Official framing of foreign policy decisions when she stated:

Look, the truth of the matter is, though, unless you know where you’re going, unless you’re clear about where you’re going, you will go nowhere. And what moral clarity gives you is a compass against which to measure everything else—because you’re right, it is a complex world, it’s a hard world. The complexities bring you into different kinds of situations in which different tactics are important.
But if you ever lose sight of what you think is wrong and what is right, then you have nothing to guide you. And if you ever lose sight of the fact that there is wrong and right, you have nothing to guide you. (April 29)

Her emphasis on moral “compass” indicates that morality serves as a kind of interpretive lens for official decision making. Morality becomes a concept through which the complex world of international affairs can be interpreted. Rice seems to disdain the “cloistered debate” and its “hues of gray and nuance,” which helps illustrate her preference for easily-discernable values. If anything, the role of moral framing helps decision makers by clearing up the ambiguities and complexities that come along with all foreign policy decisions. In terms of its influence on the Administration’s framing of foreign policy issues, the US-Saudi partnership in particular, this sense of moral clarity is most evident in their public justifications for policy. So if Rice’s depiction of morality and its role in decision making is correct, then her comments help explain the substance and framing of official rhetoric.

In terms of its importance to communication theory, the emphasis on constructing ‘the good’ within a dichotomous moral framing indicates an important adaptation of both prophetic dualism (Wander, 1984) and the Cold War drama (Stuckey, 1995). Here, theorists should note a re-configuration of the Cold War drama to fit new historical trends. Through the one-sided construction of Wander’s prophetic dualism, official rhetoric effectively recasts the Cold War narrative to include a new set of historical realities. This suggests that moralistic dramatized descriptions of foreign policy issues can be retold in many different historical circumstances regardless of their congruence with reality. Although scholars may argue over the efficacy with which the
administration employs this strategy, its appearance in the Crawford and post-Crawford addresses remains a salient feature of White House rhetoric on the US-Saudi partnership.

**Domestication and Personification**

A second strategy seen in the post-Crawford addresses indicates an expanded version of Schiappa’s (1989) domestication strategy that makes use of relational metaphors. As discussed in the analysis, descriptive themes like partnership, mutual respect, appreciation, family, personal bonding, male bonding, western hospitality, and the like, all domesticate the relationship. Although these themes certainly facilitate a domestication of the relationship by relying upon simplistic metaphors drawn from “ordinary language” (1989), these descriptive appeals go beyond simplifying a complicated relationship insofar as they construct a persona or an impression of the relationship that personifies both the content and characters involved in the partnership. Crown Prince Abdallah, for example, is the subject of very glowing descriptions as a peace visionary, a partner, man of “enormous influence,” a family friend, even “a man who’s got a farm and understands the land,” and all reiterate his positive personal qualities that make him such a distinguished partner to the US, especially when contrasted with Yasir Arafat as discussed above (Bush, April 25).

Domesticating the Crown Prince also ‘Westernizes’ and de-orientalizes him. As discussed in Chapter III, Americans were skeptical of a country that produced the 9-11 hijackers and Osama bin Laden. In many ways, few Americans had come to appreciate the values, history, and cultural nuances of the Arab world, opting for the images and stereotypes they saw on Television and in films. Therefore, as a visual rhetoric, the
appearance of the Saudi Crown Prince alongside President Bush at the Crawford Ranch had a subtle but powerful appeal to certain domestic audiences. The westernized appearance of the talks helped Americans relate to the Crown Prince as someone who was ‘just like us.’ As President Bush explained, the Crown Prince had a ranch and knew the land, just like a Midwestern farmer or a farm hand. In the White House’s rendition of the visit, the Crown Prince became a character in a narrative that took place on a western landscape—a ranch in Texas nonetheless. Likening the Crown Prince to westerners via the ranch motif, Bush delivered the subtle message that the Crown Prince—and the Saudis by association, are just like us. White House rhetoric, therefore, created an impression of the Prince that was familiar and friendly, just as Bush described him. This rhetoric ‘westernized’ the Saudis to help improve their image with domestic audiences.

In sum, however, these characterizations and personifications of the Crown Prince and the Saudis functioned rhetorically in a manner that has not been fully explored by foreign policy scholars. By creating specific descriptions of national actors and diplomatic relationships, the domestication strategy seen in the analysis chapter include issues of personification that make it distinct from Schiappa’s original rendition. In sum, the Administration’s use of relational metaphors to domesticate the US-Saudi partnership indicates a new form of domestication as it attempts to personify the relationship. Additionally, the ‘westernizing’ of the Arab Prince showed an equally innovative rhetorical technique. For these reasons, foreign policy scholars should add personification and westernization to any list of strategic metaphors used to domesticate particular foreign policy issues.
More generally, the use of metaphors and narrative as a substitute for a factual account of US-Saudi diplomacy distorts the true nature of the relationship. A story about good and evil, the war on terror, and the partnership for peace, reads like a novel. It entertains more than it informs. White House rhetoric describes US-Saudi relations like a wild west novel as it distinguishes the good characters from the bad in an effort to simplify the history of a complex multifaceted relationship into a quick dramatic sound-bite. In the end, domestication and prophetic dualism turn a factual historical relationship into an easily-digestible tale about two partners waging a war against terror. It says nothing, for example, about how many of the 9-11 hijackers emerged from Saudi Arabia. Nor does explain the considerable ambiguity surrounding Osama bin Laden, who at one time was the US’s front-man in the war against the Soviets. Neither does it identify the murky relationship between Saudi oil, Western industry, and US foreign policy. It also fails to describe the strategic services offered by the Saudi Kingdom. And while it obscures the reality of the relationship, White House rhetoric also severely limits the public’s understanding of a vital foreign policy issue that impacts US national security.

By limiting the public’s understanding of the US-Saudi relationship, White House rhetoric removes a paramount topic from public discourse and criticism. Because the Saudis are so deeply tied to US national security interests, their role in US foreign policy should command a leading position in public discourse. Instead, the Saudi role is either over-simplified, distorted, or narrowly criticized. White House rhetoric certainly commits the first two of these tactics while contributing to the third. The Michael Moores of the world will continually assail the relationship without a fuller understanding of its historical and strategic underpinnings, yet, White House rhetoric, with its emphasis
on distorted narratives and over-simplified renditions of history, seems to only invite such criticism.
References


