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The Metamorphosis

The Muslim Brotherhood from a political asset to a security threat

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to analyse how in Saudi Arabia's perception the Muslim Brotherhood went from being a political asset to a security threat for the Kingdom. It does so by examining the reoccurring historical (in)security elements of the regime in order to understand why they are perceived as a threat. By examining the origin and ideology of the Brotherhood we gain an understanding on how the organization can pose a threat.

The time period examined in this work includes the modern history of Saudi Arabia, leading up to March 2014 when Saudi Arabia officially classified the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. The work has been conducted through a qualitative analysis of the empirics on which the theory of Securitization has been applied. The empirics have been gathered from academic literature, newspapers and articles.

What has been shown is that that the Kingdom does not solely perceive its regime survival from a materialistic balance of power perspective, but rather from a broader and more inclusive. The security of Saudi Arabia has been not to balance neighbouring interests, but rather to walk a line of managing internal and international interests in order to maintain the primacy of the monarchical family and its interests. By applying the theory of Securitization, this dissertation analyses how the mutual accommodation between Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood altered under politicized and later securitized religion.

Keywords: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The Muslim Brotherhood, Securitization, Security.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION.....	2
1.2 DELIMITATIONS.....	2
1.3 METHOD AND MATERIAL	2
1.4 THEORY.....	4
1.5 PREVIOUS RESEARCH	6
1.6 BACKGROUND.....	8
1.7 DISPOSITION.....	9
2 THE DOMESTIC CHALLENGES OF THE LATTER HALF OF 20 TH CENTURY.....	10
2.1 AT THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE, THE REIGN OF IBN SA'UD	10
2.2 THE POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION, THE REIGN OF FAYSAL	12
2.3 BALANCING REGIONAL INTEREST : THREAT PERCEPTION OF A DESERT KINGDOM.....	12
2.4 TROUBLE AT THE OASIS: DOMESTIC DISSENT AND STATE REPRESSION	15
2.5 A NEW SECURITY LANDSCAPE.....	16
3 AN ISLAMIC MONARCHY POST 9/11	19
3.1 REFORMS	19
3.2 UNEMPLOYMENT	20
3.3 SUCCESSION	21
3.4 DOMESTIC TERRORISM.....	21
4 THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD.....	23
4.1 HISTORY.....	23
4.2 IDEOLOGY.....	26
4.3 POLITICAL ASSET	28
5 THE METAMORPHOSIS; THE TRANSFORMATION OF A BROTHERHOOD.....	30
5.1 REGIONALLY	30
5.2 DOMESTICALLY.....	31
5.3 SECURITIZING RELIGION.....	32
5.4 POLITICIZED AND SECURITIZED: ASSET AND/OR THREAT	34
6 CONCLUSION	36
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

1 Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has since its creation been the protector of the two holiest places of Islam, Mecca and Medina. This has given them great ideological and religious influence in the Muslim world. Whether openly or through Islamic charity organizations the regime has financially supported widely different groups, from; the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, to the March 14 political coalition in Lebanon in efforts to spread their version of Islam, Wahhabism, or to counterbalance the influence of other states. One of the major receivers of Saudi support has been the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), who fleeing oppression in Egypt under President Nasser arrived in the Kingdom during the 1950s. There they established themselves and came to dominate the intellectual scene. Starting to fuse the teaching of Sheik Abdul Wahhab and teachings of the MB, leading to what is known as the *Tayyar al-Sahawi* (religious awakening.)¹ This doctrine established itself as the dominant one, and led to the intellectual discourse of the last 30 years to become “static” owing to the overt domination of MB thought in the Kingdom.

With the ousting of Mubarak’s regime in 2011, we witnessed the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood into mainstream politics in Egypt. With the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) winning a landslide election under the auspice of the MB, positioning their candidate as the first, post authoritarian, elected President. During the popular uprising, thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to express a plurality of causes, the most dominant one being the request for Mubarak to step down from his 30 year Presidency. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia bemoaned the fall of Mubarak and worked extensively against the imminent rise of the MB, quickly tying close relations with the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, promising them \$4 billion in aid to compensate for the US disengagement. The fact that KSA choose to side against a fellow Sunni Islamic group baffled scholars and analysts alike. At a quick glance it would be more logical if Saudi had wholeheartedly backed the MB. A way to understand why Saudi Arabia changed their foreign policy the way they did, would be if a strong MB in Egypt was perceived as an existential threat to the Kingdom.

¹ Alhussein, M.E, 2011. *Reforming the religious discourse in Saudi Arabia (2011-10)*. In *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*. Shahram Akbarzadeh (ed.) Routledge. p. 180. The translation of *Tayyar al-Sahawi* is taken from the source. A literary translation would be “awakening trend”.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this dissertation will be to highlight the historical events and issues that shaped the Kingdom's policy vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood. In doing so this dissertation hope to show that the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia was not created in a vacuum, but rather that it was a historically recurrent response that finds its origin in Saudi (in)security. The research question I am investigating is:

- How and why did Saudi Arabia change its perception of the Muslim Brotherhood from being a political asset to a security threat to the Kingdom?

Hypothesis,

The hypothesis is that Saudi Arabia has strategically shifted religion from being *politicized* to *securitized*.

1.2 Delimitations

In order to attain a clear understanding of the underlying historical aspects affecting Saudi Arabia's sense of security the period is limited to the span covering the years 1953-2014. This was a calculated choice as it covers the time from Ibn Sa'ud's death and the events that followed, to the declaration of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization that took place on the March 8 2014.

The focal point of the work has been on the Muslim Brotherhood organization in Egypt and its relationship with Saudi Arabia, as such it has excluded groups that are affiliated with the mother-organization e.g., Hamas and Jabhat al-Nusra. Even though al-Qaeda is based on 'Qutubian' teachings this dissertation will treat the group as a separate entity, as they do not represent the Muslim Brotherhood organization as a whole, but rather acts independently, with a separate agenda, from the mother-organization.

1.3 Method and Material

The method of this thesis takes a historical approach in trying to understand the recent shift of Saudi Arabian foreign policy. Due to the interpretative nature and the phrasing of the question posed a qualitative method of analyzing the empirics has been chosen, as “why” is best analyzed by this approach.² The stated aim of this dissertation is to examine the behavioral patterns of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy in order to understand the regimes historical perception of security and how this affected their relationship vis-à-vis the MB. According to Denscombe a qualitative analysis of data is concerned with interpreting and understanding how people comprehend events, and reoccurring behavioral patterns.³ A qualitative method is as such a natural choice for the question posed.

In order to analyze how the Kingdom perceives its security I will focus on relevant literature and articles in order to establish a baseline understanding of Saudi Arabian and Muslim Brotherhood history. The dissertation will then highlight events in the Kingdom’s history that displays a foreign policy based on the accumulation of domestic vis-à-vis international interests, placing a focus on issues that correlate with the political (in)security of Saudi Arabia.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of security as phenomena, it is implausible to attain a clear understanding of why an issue is seen as existential and not political when examining it as a separate entity. It is therefore necessary to examine the underlying factors that play a considerable part in shaping the security policy of the state. The aim with doing so is to accentuate recurring trends within the phenomena, and to depict a confluence of events.

The first part of the analysis will be a chronological retelling of Saudi history in order to examine the question “why”, by depicting the Kingdom’s historical perception of (in)security, both domestically and in the instances where an ideological threat has been matched with a large military force. The dissertation will then examine *how* the Muslim Brotherhood is perceived as a threat towards Saudi Arabia. It will do so by analyzing the origin and ideology of the organization, and the respective role they have played within the Kingdom in order to gain a clear understanding of the MB as a political asset. In order to comprehend the recent change of Saudi Arabian foreign policy vis-à-vis the MB it will then analyze the period covering 2011-2014 using the theory of securitization. However, in order to understand the recent changes it is paramount to attain a certain level of background knowledge on how security in Saudi Arabia perceived and shaped.

The empirical material in this dissertation is consistent of predominantly secondary sources in the form of scientific publications and articles. In order to counter the inherent weakness of secondary sources the author has applied a triangulation. If the empirics deviates itself from other sources it

² Svenning, Conny. 1999. *Method 101*. Lorentz publishing. p. 71-72.

³ Denscombe, Martyn. 1998. *Forskningshandboken—för småskaliga forskningsprojekt inom samhällsvetenskaperna*. Studentlitteratur. p. 243.

has been excluded in order to maintain a high degree of validity.

A short note on the spelling of names and places. In this dissertation, the writing will be consistently inconsistent. That is to say that the author has maintained a consistency in his own writing, but has chosen to keep quotes intact.

1.4 Theory

This study will be conducted through the theory of *securitization*, which is the focal point of Copenhagen School of Security Studies. The study will aim at applying the theory in analyzing the recent change in Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The theory will thus be applied on the timespan that covers 2011-2014. Ole Wæver coined the term securitization in 1995, and the theory is generally seen as a symbiosis between the realist school of thought, and constructivism.⁴ Buzan explains it as “the exact definition and criteria of securitization is constituted intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects.”⁵ The discourse thus aims to examine the transformation of an issue into an existential security threat, which allows for the implementation of extraordinary means in order to maintain or establish security.

Security in itself is the process of taking an issue from the political sphere and placing it outside the scope of politics.⁶ The actor can do so because it argues that the threat is existential and should be placed above all other issues. Securitization studies tries to create a wider framework that expands to sectors beyond the purely traditional military-political.⁷

The task is not to assess whether a threat is objectively threatening the existence of a referent object; rather it is to create an understanding of what is perceived, considered and responded to as a threat. Ole Wæver argues that the process of securitization is a *speech act*. “It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act.”⁸ Security as such is not a factual matter but something that has intersubjectively been declared by the actor(s) that instigates the speech act. However, the presentation of an issue as existential to a referent object

⁴ Williams, Michael C. 2003. *Words, Images, Enemies, Securitization and International Politics*, International Studies Quarterly. p. 512.

⁵ Buzan, B. (et.al) 1997. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Pub. p. 25.

⁶ Ibid. p. 23-24.

⁷ Ibid. p. 195.

⁸ Ibid. p. 26.

does not alone constitute a successful securitization. This is a securitizing move, and the issue will be securitized only when, and if, the audience accepts it as such. Accept in this case does not necessarily mean in civilized discussion; it solely mean that acceptance always rests on coercion as well as on consent.⁹

In order to analyze an issue through the prism of securitization, it is fructiferous to give a clear definition of *existential threat*. A threat of existential magnitude can only be understood in light of the particular character of the referent object. For the sake of this analysis the threat will not be assessed on an individual basis, where security could constitute whether one will wake up in the morning, or in the case of the supporter of a family if they will have bread on their table.¹⁰ Rather the definition will be inclusive and focused around threats that are posed against the “constituting principle—sovereignty, but sometimes also ideology—of the state”.¹¹ These can be threatened by anything that challenges the legitimacy, recognition or governing authority of the state.

Any public issue can be placed within the spectrum ranging from nonpoliticized; the state has no hand in it, and it is not part of any public debate; through politicized, government makes the decisions, allocates resources and the issue is part of a public policy; to securitized, presenting the issue as an existential threat that is outside the scope of normal political procedure.¹² A successful securitization has three main components that all have to be present in order to constitute a successful securitization move. The first being the actor: the one who instigates the speech act and who calls out the security issue. The second is the referent object: the issue that according to the actor needs to be placed under protection. Thirdly, we have the audience, which needs to be convinced by the speech act and as such allow the issue to be securitized.¹³ The presence, or absence, of these will all have to be found throughout the scope of the paper in order to confirm or disprove a securitization act.

Several authors have over the year discussed and argued for and against the Copenhagen school of security studies. Its validity in the academic field of security; is it aiding a debate by widening what the concept of security should entice, or is it counterproductively making it too wide in order to gain the depth needed.

Realists deemed it dangerous as it opened up “Pandora's Box”¹⁴ of issues by introducing non-military aspects into the field of security studies. Stephen Walt argued that by broadening the field

⁹ Ibid. p. 25.

¹⁰ Bigo, Didier 2008. *International Political Sociology*. In *Security Studies: An Introduction*. Paul D. Williams (ed.) Routledge. p. 123.

¹¹ Buzan, B. (et.al) (1998) p. 22.

¹² Ibid. p. 23-24.

¹³ Ibid. p. 36.

¹⁴ Bigo, D. (2008) p. 122.

of Security Studies it would lessen its focus on military threats that was still highly needed. It would also diminish its value as a coherent field of academic study.¹⁵ By acknowledging that there are other actors in play besides states, it also made a slight shift away from traditional realism and its state-centric focus. While critical theorists have applauded the Copenhagen school for opening up the realm of security studies to issues beyond the materialistic and military focus of the realists. Others like Pinar Bilgin agree on the value of broadening the agenda but argues simultaneously that it has not done enough to break free from the state-centric focus of the cold war security thinking. The danger could, she argues, exist in using Cold War thinking in a broader agenda, as the discourse was characterized by zero-sum thinking with an us versus them approach and applying such thinking to environmental and social issues could have a calamitous effect.¹⁶ Because, if the broadening of security was to take place without the re-conceptualizing of agents and practices then measures to address them would still be carried out with traditional methods.¹⁷

The theory was chosen due to its relevance as a theoretical framework in the attempt to understand the Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia by looking at the (in)security of the actor. As the aim of the thesis is to examine how the state of Saudi Arabia has changed its perception of the Muslim Brotherhood, a state-centric approach is as such already the focus of the thesis. The discourse of securitization tries to understand International Relations from a security perspective,¹⁸ which is the central part of this dissertation and will answer the question “why”.

Thus, this dissertation will try to analyze how the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perceives its security, and how their understanding of potential, and real, threats effected the choices made post-spring 2011.

1.5 Previous research

In “Sectarianism as Counter-Revolution: Saudi Responses to the Arab Spring”,¹⁹ Madawi al-Rasheed aims to look beyond the rentier state and economic largesse dimension of Saudi Arabia’s

¹⁵ Walt, S.M. 1991. *The renaissance of Security Studies*. International Studies Quarterly, 35(2): 211-39. p. 213.

¹⁶ Bilgin, Pinar. 2004. *Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective (Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies)*. Routledge. p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 30.

¹⁸ Bigo, D. (2008) p. 117.

¹⁹ Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2011. Sectarianism as Counter-Revolution: Saudi Responses to the Arab Spring. Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol. 11, No. 3, (p 513-526).

counter-revolutionary arsenal. By analyzing the sectarian divide as a regime-employed strategy, that “prevents the development of national non-sectarian politics”²⁰; she aims to highlight an often-overlooked aspect in Saudi’s arsenal. By using a clear narrative, she elegantly portrays a Kingdom in which the formation of political parties and civil society is banned but the religious sphere remains relatively open. The mosque has thus become a platform for public mobilization. In a country with weak nationalism and strong Islamism, the regime employs a divide and rule strategy. The ruling family fosters the impression that it alone can mediate between the tribes and sects, and that without its efforts the security of all citizens would be threatened.²¹

Her work offers a coherent insight into an aspect that is often overlooked or ignored, making this a valuable account of the Kingdom’s counter-revolutionary arsenal.

In the wake of the Arab uprisings, Toby Craig Jones wrote “Saudi Arabia Versus the Arab Spring”²², in which he discussed the different tools the Kingdom adopted in order to maintain the status quo. By looking at the international, regional and domestic aspects, he manages to give a holistic oversight, whilst by examining the aspects individually achieving a deeper insight into the Kingdom’s counter-revolutionary measures. He ties their measure to maintain the status quo with another imperative, to protect the Kingdom’s regional hegemony, and the advantages it gains from the oil-dependent global economy.²³ In analyzing oil, rentier economy and the royal family’s largesse, he links the U.S. commitment to maintain the status quo in the Persian Gulf to the counter-revolutionary ability of the Kingdom. Painting a picture of America as an accomplice, due to its fears over Iranian influence in the region.²⁴ His work offers a great insight into the Kingdom’s situation and the way it dealt with them.

Gregory Gause’s “Saudi Arabia in the New Middle East” examines the role of the Kingdom in the changing landscape that was brought on by the Arab uprisings. In an elegant manner, he manages to portray a complex situation in a comprehensible fashion without losing the depth needed to attain a clear analysis. Unlike the previous authors mentioned, this work starts by questioning how counter-revolutionary KSA really was.²⁵ Highlighting that they supported the ousting of Muammar al-Qaddafi, negotiated the transfer of power in Yemen and condemned the actions taken by Syrian

²⁰ Ibid. p. 513.

²¹ Ibid. p. 522.

²² Craig, J.T. 2011. Saudi Arabia Versus the Arab Spring. *Raritan*, Vol. 31 Issue 2. (p 43-59).

²³ Ibid. p. 45.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 59.

²⁵ Gause III F. Gregory, 2011b. *Saudi Arabia in the New Middle East: Council Special Report*. Council on Foreign Relations. p. 18.

president Bashar al-Assad.²⁶ Another interesting aspect of the work is that it aims to go beyond analysing solely domestic and regional factors that kept the regime in power by including another layer, namely an attempt to understand why the regime acted the way it did. He attains his conclusions by examining what he calls “the Saudi Losing Streak”²⁷, in which he analyses the Kingdom’s battle for political influence versus Iran. By looking at events in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine he concludes that Saudi Arabia has come to a position where it needs to maintain and protect its sphere of influence.²⁸ Thus, the first impulse in the wake of the upheavals was defending against the potential continuation of this “losing streak”.

Like T.C. Jones, he discusses the relationship between the Kingdom and U.S., but he takes a different approach in which he questions the relationship and argues that it has changed, as it is no longer “moored to the two anchors that stabilized it in the past”²⁹, a common perspective on the Cold-War and U.S. operations regarding Saudi oil. He maintains that due to the growing number of issues on which they differentiate, it should be recognized that the “relationship is now more transactional than automatically cooperative”.³⁰

Gause offers an alternative perspective on Saudi Arabia’s position that manages in an efficient manner to cover a wide array of angles, from America’s interests to domestic threats to regime stability.

1.6 Background

For the sake of the question posed, it is necessary to gain a baseline understanding of the origins of Saudi Arabia, as this will help establish a perspective on what affects the foreign policy of the state. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia finds its roots in the mid-18th century when an alliance between Muhammad bin Sa’ud from the al-Saud family and the Islamic scholar Shaykh Muhammad ibn bin Abd al-Wahhab. The Shaykh taught a strict expansionist doctrine that was puritanical in its form. It fused remarkably well with the goals of the Saud family, who gained the legitimacy to conquer the land they had their eyes on. Al-Wahhab would give religious backing for the expansionist desires held by Muhammad bin Sa’ud. Together they laid the foundations for a dynastic power sharing

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 31.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 32.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 19.

³⁰ Ibid.

alliance that is still present today. By 1932 the al-Saud family had been successful in conquering most of the Arabian Peninsula and established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Creating the state required the subjugation of diverse – religious, ethnic and tribal- groups that would all be put under the banner of Saudi Arabia. A kingdom named after its ruling family, with no apparent cohesive unity and a plurality of Islamic interpretations. As Madawi al-Rasheed described it, “*The 20th century witnessed the emergence of a state imposed on people without a historical unity or national heritage which would justify their inclusion into a single entity*”.³¹ Yet the state managed to embed itself into society thanks to polygamist marriages with conquered tribes, raising many of their former enemies to maternal kin in order to deter from dissent. This also aided in creating a dependency on the state, which further diminished the likelihood of disunity.³² Ibn Sa’ud’s success stemmed to a great deal from his ability to fuse prowess as a military tribal leader with the religious status from the Wahhabi order.³³ By persuading and influencing the tribes to adapt the tradition and social outlook of Wahhabi Islam he managed to create a “communal loyalty” which in essence meant that their commitment to the success of Ibn Sa’ud was tied to their wish to expand Wahhabism.³⁴

The nature of the state at this period was that of an absolute monarchy. The King made all political decisions regardless of size, and the institutions of government came to reflect his dominance. In 1953 at the time of his passing, the country lacked a constitution and government that could take policy decisions. As Cleveland gracefully describes it, “The Quran was the constitution, and the *shari’ah* was the law.”³⁵

1.7 Disposition

The following chapter will examine the issues that faced the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the latter half of the twentieth century. It is divided into five shorter sub-chapters in order to present a coherent, yet lucid, historical oversight. The chapter “An Islamic Monarchy Post 9/11”, examines the situation that faced Saudi Arabia on the onset of the Arab uprisings by looking at the in(security) issues present in the Kingdom from 2001-2011. Chapter four will delve into the Muslim

³¹ al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2010. *A History of Saudi Arabia*. 2 Edition. Cambridge University Press. p 3

³² Ibid. p. 219.

³³ Cleveland W.L. 2008. *A History of the Modern Middle East, Fourth Edition*. 4th Edition. Westview Press. p 231

³⁴ Ibid. p. 232.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 452.

Brotherhood, and after a short account of their history and ideological foundation, an analysis of their role as an asset for Saudi Arabia will follow. “The Metamorphosis” will firstly aim to understand Saudi Arabia’s perception on the Arab uprisings, regionally and domestically. Thereafter it will analyse whether a successful securitization is evident, and if this in effect could explain the shift in Saudi’s foreign policy. Finally, the acquired results will be discussed, and a conclusion will be drawn in order to answer the question put.

2 The domestic challenges of the latter half of 20th century

2.1 At the brink of collapse, the reign of Ibn Sa’ud

The beginning of the 50s brought with them arguably the most troubled times in the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Crown Prince Sa’ud was declared King after the passing of his father, raising his brother Faysal to the post of Crown Prince. King Sa’ud’s time coincided with rapid social changes that were brought on by the increase in petro-dollar and the rise of Pan-Arabism in the form of Nasser and Ba’ath. The changes to social and political order brought on by the fiscal development threatened the conservative stratum of society, from whom the ruling family gained the basis of its support.³⁶ His reign as king was marked by the immense internal struggle for supremacy between the two brothers with the political situation at several times becoming so volatile that the state was on the brink of collapse.³⁷ The newly found oil wealth did nothing to ease the financial debt the state had inherited from the former ruler, estimated to have been at \$200 million at 1953. By 1958, the debt had more than doubled reaching \$480 million.³⁸ This did not stop the lavish spending by the King, which only furthered the internal political struggle between the brothers. King Sa’ud continued to use the state treasury for personal indulgences, squandering millions of dollars. The lifestyle he chose made him into an embarrassment for the Royal family³⁹, and his name came to be associated with the plundering of the royal treasury, palace luxury and vice.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 452-453.

³⁷ Madawi al-Rasheed carries a more detailed discussion of the situation between the brothers. p. 106-107.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 107.

³⁹ Cleveland, W. (2008) p. 453.

The battle for political supremacy created dissent in the rank of the younger princes who created their own block in order to get their voices heard.⁴⁰ The internal rivalry between the princes came to challenge the patrilineal system and showed the inherent weakness of the Saudi succession.

Led by Prince Talal the group started oscillating between Sa'ud and Faysal shifting their allegiances depending on the situation. They initially supported the king, but later moved their support towards Faysal, who promised to listen to their demands. It did not take long before the group started to distance themselves politically, and they eventually proposed the creation of a National Council, a consultative rather than legislative assembly.⁴¹ Talal's propositions were largely ignored, and he was dismissed from government in 1961. He then moved to Cairo and Beirut where he started the royal opposition group, *al-umara' al-ahrar*, the Free Princes, with the aim to create a Constitutional Monarchy in Saudi Arabia. The group was influenced by the current trends in the Middle East, especially Nasserism which at the time was seen as an ideological threat to the political security of the Kingdom. In a time where regional upheaval was amok and instigated by the Free Officers the threat of dissent in the state was perceived as real. Saudi Arabia at the time did not have the capability to educate officers; as such, the threat of a military coup was minimal. Instead they had the Free Princes who were heavily influenced and openly advocated socialism, Nasserism and a Constitutional Monarchy.⁴²

This internal struggle continued until 1962, when Faysal, in the absence of the King⁴³ formed a cabinet. The new government included stout followers of the Crown Prince and excluded the sons of Sa'ud. The King deemed this unacceptable and at the time of his return he threatened to mobilise the Royal Guards against his brother. Faysal then ordered the mobilisation of the National Guard against the King, in effect forcing him to abdicate.⁴⁴ The abdication meant the end to the infighting that had threatened to destroy the kingdom from within.

This period in Saudi history displays the issues that come with their patrimonial succession. As the line to the throne is not clear it allows for political manoeuvring in order to (de)stabilise the reign. The dissent in the form of the Free Princes depicts a monarchy in which the ruling family is fractured, and does not make out a cohesive unit. The strong ideological pull from Socialism and Nasser came to influence them, and helped shape their ideological stance. In a time when the King was struggling and losing influence vis-à-vis Nasser and Pan-Arabism, the dissent from within his

⁴⁰ Al-Rasheed, M (2002) p. 109-110.

⁴¹ Yizraeli, S. 1997. *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia*, Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle East and African Studies. p. 112.

⁴² al-Rasheed, M. (2002) p. 112.

⁴³ King Sa'ud was currently out of the country for medical treatment, something that often correlated with domestic turbulence.

⁴⁴ al-Rasheed, M (2002) p. 114.

own family was a political blow that the Kingdom could not afford.

2.2 The politicization of religion, the reign of Faysal

Faysal's reign (1964-1975) came to transform Saudi Arabia in more ways than one viz., educational system, militarily and the regional stature of the state. He adopted the notion of modernisation within an Islamic framework, and used religion to distinguish himself from his "corrupt" brother.⁴⁵ Saudi Arabian media started displaying his piety with pictures of the King praying in mosques attempting to portray him as the "authentic Muslim king."⁴⁶ The informal alliance between religion and the state came to be formalised during the reign of Faysal. By granting the senior members of the *'ulama*⁴⁷ posts as state functionaries he efficiently co-opted the religious institutions. His elegant use of religious identity enabled him to become the champion of Islam and granted him immense legitimacy both domestically and regionally. This would reach its peak with his fateful decision to participate in the oil embargo of 1973. This decision transformed the Kingdom into an international economic powerhouse.

During a time when technological innovations and the changes to society that came with them threatened to create a divide between the religious conservatives on the one hand and the king's wishes to modernize Saudi Arabia on the other, Faysal strove to incorporate the *'ulama* into the state and started to reward the more modern of them, those who were willing to endorse his reforms to gain concessions.⁴⁸ This period was marked by the regime consolidating the politicization of religion, and the process of institutionalizing the religious identity, making it synonymous with the piety of the royal family.

2.3 Balancing regional interest: threat perception of a desert Kingdom

KSA's foreign policy has been based on accommodation and the maintenance of balance of regional

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 123.

⁴⁶ Ibid. For further discussion, see page 230.

⁴⁷ Religious scholars that rule on point of law.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 124.

interests.⁴⁹ The Kingdom was averse to become part of the region's balance of power as they realized that they could not possibly build a competitive military despite huge spending on armament. After the oil embargo of 1973, they attained an unmatched economy and the influence that comes with it. The conduct of Saudi Arabian foreign policy came to reflect this. While their perceived enemies went for a more hard-liner approach, building military arsenals to balance the power of the other, the Kingdom used the oil revenues and religious legitimacy to become a major player in regional politics.

They used the obtained wealth partially to finance religious groups in other countries. e.g., America and Saudi Arabia donated an estimate of \$40 billion dollars to Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion.⁵⁰ This was an attempt to bolster the Mujahidin fighters and build religious schools to spread Wahhabi Islam. They actively supported the “front-line” Arab states in their conflict with Israel, from the Khartoum Conference through the 1973 war.⁵¹ During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia “compensated” regional and international allies for their support against Iraq.⁵²

Saudi's balance of regional interests has been based on their perception of the potential threat that states pose against the domestic security of the regime.⁵³ The greatest threat being from states that possess a strong military power coupled with a political legitimacy that attacks the political security of the Saudi regime. During such circumstances, there is little room to doubt whom they will balance against, as will be discussed further below. The more interesting cases are the ones where the source of the threat is a bit muddled. One state could pose a potential threat due to the superior military power they possess, while another could be an ideological threat and openly hostile against the Saudi regime but materialistically weaker. When this is the case Saudi Arabia has adopted a strategy of balancing against the ideological threat, and has repeatedly shown that they perceive it as the worse of the two. This claim finds its validity in reoccurring assessment of threats and allegiances in which the Kingdom has engaged.

The Kingdom has since its creation feared the Hashemite families and their influence. Partially due to their bloodline that is traced back to Prophet Mohammad. The bloodline and the fact that the tribe originates from the Hijaz area gives them a legitimate right to the holy sites that Saudi Arabia does not enjoy. Through the 1940s and 1950s, they were on bad terms with the Hashemites in Iraq and Jordan. King Abdullah the ruler of Transjordan harbored dreams to create an Arab land

⁴⁹ Gause III F. Gregory, 2011a. *Saudi Arabia's Regional Security Strategy*. In *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*. Mehran Kamrava (ed.) New York: Syracuse University Press. p. 176.

⁵⁰ Wyndbrandt p. 246.

⁵¹ Gause, G (2011a) p. 178.

⁵² Yahya Sadowski, 1993 *Scuds or Butter? The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. p. 20.

⁵³ Gause, G. (2011a) p. 170-173.

consisting of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, commonly known as the Fertile Crescent.⁵⁴ This would make them far too powerful in the eyes of Saudi Arabia, because of this they were perceived as a mortal enemy. Therefore, they could not deal with them on the basis of a community of interests. The threat from the Hashemite family disappeared in 1958 when Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim staged a bloody military coup in Iraq, successfully overthrowing the Hashemite regime. In the 1960's and 70's they sided with the shah of Iran against the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, even though Iran had the clear military advantage between the two. In the war between Iraq and Iran, they sided with the militarily stronger Iraq against the revolutionary Iran, again due to the perceived threat of an opposing ideology. "Hussein's secular Baathist regime was regarded as a threat to the Saudi kingdom, but Iran, with its goal of spreading its Shia Islamic revolution throughout the region, was judged as the greater evil"⁵⁵

The rise of Nasser in Egypt was a clear threat to Saudi political stability. Even so, in the beginning Saudi Arabia chose to side with him against the Hashemite family in Jordan and Iraq, signing a mutual-defense treaty with Nasser in 1955. This was mainly a counter-reaction to the Baghdad Pact,⁵⁶ which Iraq just joined in order to counter their rising influence.⁵⁷ With the fall of the Hashemite family in Iraq the threat perception of the royal family changed. Nasser and his calls for pan-Arabism became the new threat towards the royal family. His charismatic speeches and calls for Arab unity gave him followers and sympathizers all over the Arab World. The relationship between the two states came to a peak with an Egyptian invitation to train Saudi officers. Later this turned out to be a mistake, as the recruits became indoctrinated, shifted allegiances and tried to stage a coup in 1955.⁵⁸ In 1956, Nasser was invited to Saudi Arabia to discuss a proposed union that would include the two countries and Syria. His arrival was met with high levels of popular support, something that gave off warning signals to Faysal and Sa'ud.⁵⁹ The relationship between the two states soon started to deteriorate, as Nasser's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which Saudi Arabia had continued to support, his call for Pan-Arabism and the anti-imperialist rhetoric displayed a relationship that was doomed to fail.⁶⁰ A Lebanese newspaper revealed that King Sa'ud had given a Syrian officer a check for £1.9 million to have him assassinate Nasser. The failed attempt coincided with his rising popularity after the Suez Crisis, and only

⁵⁴ Wyndbrandt, J. (2010) p. 204.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 245.

⁵⁶ A coalition between Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Britain. It was designed to be a defensive pact that would allow assistance in order to protect nations deemed vital to western interests. Cf. also Hourani, A. (2005) p 363

⁵⁷ al-Rasheed, M. (2002) p. 115.

⁵⁸ Safran, N. 1985. Saudi Arabia: *The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 81.

⁵⁹ Al-Rasheed, M. (2002) p. 115.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

further deteriorated the public image of Saudi Arabia.⁶¹

The divide between the two states culminated with the 1962 coup in Yemen. Inspired and executed with support from Nasser, the officers led by Abdallah al-Sallal overthrew the monarchy and proclaimed the Yemen Arab Republic.⁶² Imam Muhammad al-Badr, the former monarch, managed to flee north where he started gathering support by rallying tribes. The conflict escalated into a proxy war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom's fear was that the notion of a republic state would spread through the Gulf, and as such it became a major security concern for the ruling elite.⁶³ A few Saudi Arabian pilots defected while on a mission to supply the royalists, and flew to Egypt where they asked for asylum. One of the pilots claimed that there was a coup underway in the Kingdom, just waiting for the right moment to rise up against the regime. The Saudi leadership temporarily grounded all air traffic in order to stop more deserters from leaving the Kingdom.⁶⁴

The perceived threat from Nasser was deeply rooted amongst the elite, especially after the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958. The death of Nasser in November 1970 shook the foundations of Egypt and sent ripples throughout the Middle East. For the Kingdom's royal family it removed an ominous shadow that had for a long time been looming over them.

Saudi Arabia understood early on that they could never become a regional hegemon, and their foreign policy has come to reflect this, as they balanced the regional players in order to block them from achieving hegemony. It perceived threats not based on military capabilities and materialistic grounds, but rather on ideological differences and challenges to the ruling family's right to govern.

2.4 Trouble at the oasis: domestic dissent and state repression

This fractured society that was placed under the al-Saud name has in comparison to the region been fairly unscathed from domestic dissent. This however does not mean it has been completely free from it. During the Hajj in November 1979 a small group, numbering an estimated 3500, of armed men seized strategic positions on the road between Mecca and Medina. Led by Juhayman al-Utaybi a former officer in the National Guard and inspired by Wahhabist teachings the group, the Movement of the Muslim Revolutionaries of the Arabian Peninsula (MMRAP) soon controlled a

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Cleveland. p. 454.

⁶³ Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 220.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

major area between the two cities. The majority of the men came from the Ikhwan tribe⁶⁵, and served in the National Guard. A number were locals and foreigners that studied at the prestigious University of Medina, and were active members in the Muslim Brotherhood organization. The group split up in two and left for each of the cities. While the government troops in Medina defeated the men that came their way, the forces in Mecca were caught off guard and an estimated 200 to 1000 revolutionaries sized the main mosque. The Saudi deputy Prime Minister Prince Fahd ordered an assault on the mosque that would last for two weeks. The incident ended without any official casualty figures ever released.⁶⁶ The siege of Mecca revealed an inherent susceptibility in the regimes use of religion to gain political legitimacy, as they could be charged with impiety. During the seizure of Mecca the MMRAP widely accused the royal family of corruption. The frivolous and offensive lifestyle some of the princes lived contradicted the Islamic principles the ruling elite used to claim their legitimate right to govern. The loss of political legitimacy could have a potentially devastating effect, as it makes out the basis for the mutual relationship between the *'ulama* and the ruling family.⁶⁷

Just two weeks later unrest began amongst the Shia in the eastern province. The events coincided with the celebration of Ashura⁶⁸ that the government had since long banned within the Kingdom. In order to quell the demonstrations taking place the government dispatched 12,000-20,000 men from the National Guard. In February the year after, 1980, Shias took to the street to perform observance but found military men sent to keep them in. This sparked three days of anti-government protests that manifested itself by the burning of banks, and military barracks.⁶⁹ The events coincided with the Islamic revolution in Iran, and their early calls for exporting the revolution. Inspired by the anti Sa'ud propaganda from Teheran, the uprising convinced the ruling family that an Islamic Iran represented a serious threat to the political legitimacy and domestic security of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰

2.5 A new security landscape

The 1990s altered the source of the domestic threat towards the ruling family, having for a long time

⁶⁵ Ikhwan, meaning "the Brotherhood", was a Bedouin militia that Ibn Sa'ud created from the nomads that his army stemmed from.

⁶⁶ Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 239-241.

⁶⁷ Cleaveland, W. (2008) p. 462-463.

⁶⁸ Ashura is a Shia ritual that honours the death of the martyr Husayn. The Wahhabi clergy had since 1913 banned and suppressed this and other Shia celebrations claiming that they are heretical. See, Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 242.

⁶⁹ Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 242.

⁷⁰ al-Rasheed, M. (2002) p. 156.

been from secular sources such as Nasserism or supporters of Ba'ath, towards religious based dissent.⁷¹ The last 20 years of enhancing the *salafi* movements inside the Kingdom had increased the religious belief in a pure Islamic state. This has proven to be both positive and negative for the state as it helped them to contain secularist tendencies, and spread sectarian strife in the Kingdom. However, it also made them vulnerable to pressure from religious sources.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait showed the citizens of Saudi Arabia that the immense arms spending undertaken was inadequate; instead, they had to depend on American, “infidel”, troops to defend their country. This provoked a high level of criticism from more conservative clerics. In 1990 a leading Islamic scholar concluded that the true enemy was not Iraq, but rather the West and America.⁷² The criticism from the religious stratum of Saudi Arabia was not as easily suppressed as the secular opposition had been, due to the royal family's dependence on the *‘ulama* for legitimacy. Thus, the “age of petitions” started, where reform petitions calling for reforms were sent in from both the moderate side and the more conservative, within the Kingdom.⁷³ The pressure eventually leads to three reforms in 1992: the Basic Law of Government, the Law of the Consultative Council, and the Law of the Provinces. The Law of Government reaffirmed the monarchy and the religious grounds on which the Kingdom was based. The law emphasized the state as an Islamic monarchy in which only the ruling family had the right to govern.⁷⁴ The Law of Consultative Council established that a consultative council should be created, and outlined the role it was to play. They were to interpret laws, and examine reports on orders from the government ministers. The Council did not have the power to create laws on their own and was to work only in a consultative capacity. The Law of the Provinces aimed at creating more oversight into the dealings of the provinces, as they had been largely autonomous until the creation of the law.⁷⁵

Religious pressure from within the Kingdom hence forced them to undergo reforms to a certain degree. Whether these reforms actually managed to attain the proposals put forward or were simply an attempt to quell the critics, they highlighted the vulnerable state which the country was in at the time. The ruling family felt that they had to accede in some form, in order to maintain their status. The beginning of the 1990s brought with them memories of the exiled opposition from the 60s and 70s, with one major difference. The new dissent was an indigenous response with an Islamic rhetoric. An increased clamp marked the time of petitions down on dissent also marked the age of

⁷¹ Wyndbrandt, J. (2010) p. 262.

⁷² Ibid. p. 166.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 259.

⁷⁴ al-Rasheed, M. (2002) p. 172.

⁷⁵ Wyndbrandt, J. (2010) p. 259.

petitions, with more surveillance, intimidation and enforcement of bans on criticism.⁷⁶ This escalated in 1994 with the large protest against government corruption and immorality known as the Buraida Uprisings. A reported 1300 people were arrested, including a number of clerics and preachers. The uprising took place in the homeland of al-Saud and as such represented a dangerous estrangement from its traditional loyalists.⁷⁷ The crackdown was followed by fatwas threatening to retract their rights to preach and lecture unless they stopped. This however did not lessen the amount of dissent, and led to more arrests of the senior *'ulama*. Eventually the severe punishments that the government enforced without leniency started to quell the opposition. This however would change in 1995 when the government executed a conservative activist. The response was a number of attacks on government and U.S. installations and personnel. In the aftermath of the first Gulf War, around 20,000 American troops were positioned on Saudi Arabian soil. This led to the two bombings that took place in 1996 of American personnel. The more destructive of the two killed 19 US soldiers, and injured more than 500.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 262.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 263.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 266-267.

3 An Islamic Monarchy post 9/11

The 21st century has thus far proven to be a challenging one for the Kingdom. The attack on World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 drastically changed the position of the state vis-à-vis America and the West. The Kingdom managed to outride the issues that they were faced with, but not without pressure from both international actors, mainly U.S., and domestically. This however does not mean that they were without risk to their political stability. The following chapter will examine the (in)security of Saudi Arabia during the years from 2001-2011. It will do so in order to depict the vulnerability the regime felt on the onset of the Arab uprisings.

3.1 Reforms

The September 11 attacks put severe pressure on Saudi Arabia, the fact that 15 out of the 19 hijackers were of Saudi origin and that it was masterminded by Osama bin-Laden, a fugitive terrorist from the Kingdom, put the ruling family in a position where they had to accede with the demands of the West and carry out reforms in many areas connected to the religious establishment; such as the role of women and education.⁷⁹ The reform proposals were originally rejected as the problems were perceived as foreign. The fact that America was openly pushing for an active reform movement in the country did not aid this sentiment.⁸⁰ Demands were made regarding increased oversight of charitable organizations as they were used to funnel money to terrorist networks. In November of 2001, a survey that was carried out by the ministry of the Interior on educated Saudi men between the ages of 25 to 40 showed that 90 percent of the respondents expressed varying degree of support for bin Laden.⁸¹ The government of Saudi Arabia thus faced pressure for two directions. From America, the backer and ally of the regime, and from a domestic scene that were empathizing with the enemy of the west.

Coupled with this are the recent calls for reform of the religious establishment in the country. These reformative trends would have been impossible a decade ago, and the process depicts the domestic need to acknowledge the diversity among the Saudi Arabian population in terms of the plurality of religious and sectarian beliefs. Saudi Arabian society had previously ignored the many

⁷⁹ Alhussein, E.M. (2012) p. 179.

⁸⁰ Lippman, T.W. 2012. *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally*. Council on Foreign Relations Books, Potomac Books Inc. p. 190.

⁸¹ Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 277.

levels of diversity by advancing a religious and cultural homogenous identity. As such the most important components for social and cultural development is to acknowledge pluralism in faith, race, ideology and tribe.⁸² One of the more prominent ways the reforms has manifested itself is the foundations of *Al-Hiwar al-Watani* (the National Dialogue), which is held annually in the Kingdom. The events hosts different speakers every year discussing a wide range of topics, and acknowledging, at least in name, the notion of a pluralistic society.

We witnessed here a reoccurring trend of the ruling family having to accede to pressure from religious elements in order to maintain a harmony with the root of their political legitimacy. Being the protector of Sunni Islam grants them immense political legitimacy, but it also makes them susceptible to pressure from the religious establishment.

3.2 Unemployment

The Government of Saudi Arabia suffers from tremendous challenges domestically due to the changing financial situation amongst the population. In the beginning of the new century, an estimated 70% of the Saudi population was under 25 years and the unemployment rate among them was around 30%.⁸³ The major issue that posed is that the economy is growing at a much slower rate than the population and the government has not managed to produce enough jobs to match the growth.⁸⁴ This has led to what we recently have seen on the news; the mass expulsion of migrant workers. Two million workers were set to be expelled from the Kingdom in order to open up job opportunities for the domestic market.⁸⁵ This “Saudization” plan does little to change the situation among the local population as the vast majority of the people expelled worked menial jobs that the Saudis have shown a reticence for, whilst the European and Western workers still remain. According to IMF 1.5 million of 2 million of the new jobs created in the last four years went to non-Saudi nationals.⁸⁶

⁸² Alhussein, E.M. (2012) p. 185.

⁸³ Wydbrandt, J. (2010) p. 275.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 284.

⁸⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/29/saudi-arabia-foreign-labour-crackdown-migrants> (acquired on 2014-01-15)

⁸⁶ Ibid.

3.3 Succession

In October 2011 Crown Prince Sultan, the minister of defence and heir died, raising the prickly issue of succession yet again. The deteriorating health of King Abdullah, who at the time was eighty-eight and recovering from back surgery that had keep him outside of the country for three months. Prince Nayif, the minister of interior and at the time seventy-eight, took over the position of crown prince. The current generation in power are the sons of the founding King, and while there still is someone from this generation to take over the throne will likely be stable.⁸⁷ Problems will arise as the position will go to the second generation, as there is no clear rule for how the throne shall be passed on and the amount of potential claimants increase. As history has shown us, the internal family disputes have been a great source of insecurity for the royal family, and has highlighted the fact that the royal family does not act as a cohesive unit. The fear according to Gregory Gause is: “the possibility of a late-Soviet-style set of aging rulers, dying in quick succession, looms.”⁸⁸

3.4 Domestic Terrorism

In 2003 al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP) launched a wave of violence in the Kingdom. The attacks lasted until 2007 when the group had essentially been wiped out, even though smaller cells continued to act out minor attacks across the country.⁸⁹ During that time the group carried out approximately 20 to 25 operations within the Kingdom. The main goal of QAP was to attack western targets, which could be seen in the objects of their attacks. Three out of five car bombs; nine out of 12 assassinations; and four out of five shootings were directed towards western targets.⁹⁰ Captured militants from QAP purportedly said that the vision of the leadership was a two-stage campaign; the first to mobilize the Saudi people for a jihad against the crusaders, and a second in which they would turn the masses against the al-Sa’ud family.⁹¹ Their tactic did not however yield the desired effect, as the Saudi population as a whole did not mobilize, but rather grew appalled at

⁸⁷ Gause, G. (2011a) p. 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 11.

⁸⁹ Hegghammer, Thomas 2011. *Jihad Yes, But Not Revolution: Explaining the Extraversion of Islamist Violence in Saudi Arabia*. In *Security in the Gulf: Historical Legacies and Future Prospects*. Matteo Legrenzi (ed.) Routledge. p. 68.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 69-70.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 71.

the group due to the tactics they deployed. The decline in support for extremist actions was accelerated when Muslim children, woman and elderly people became the targets.⁹²

The Saudi regime's 'diversionary politics' in which they promoted pan-Islamism in order to export their domestic revolutionary forces had an unexpected blowback. An approximated 55% of the QAP members - likely higher - had previous jihad experience from abroad.⁹³ It was not until after the QAP campaign started that the regime dared to take measures against the pan-Islamist sentiment that was prevalent in the country.⁹⁴

From 2003, the Kingdom designated all the time and funds needed in order to combat domestic terrorism. If they could have been said to be complacent in their position before, this all changed in May that year. Four suicide car-bombs were set off in the middle of Riyadh killing 34, including eight Americans. In the aftermath clerics were instructed to condemn the attacks, and the Saudi regime started a major crackdown on domestic terrorism. The amount of resources that were allocated for counterterrorism was immense: The security budget for 2004, 2005 and 2006 was estimated to have been at US\$8.5, 10 and 12 billion respectively.⁹⁵ Even though the campaign was successful, the first two years of attacks claimed the lives of 221 people.⁹⁶

In 2007-2008 the government arrested hundreds that were suspected to try and revive the militant cells. By this time the clampdown on clerics preaching an extremist interpretation of Islam had amounted to the discharging of over a 1000 imams, and in March of 2008 Saudi Arabia announced its plans on retraining the remaining 40.000 imams in efforts to aid the battle against militant Islamism.⁹⁷

While none of the issues above is by themselves prominent enough to be a real threat to the stability of the regime, they display the difficult situation that the Kingdom experienced in the period leading up to the Arab uprisings. In order to understand the insecurity of the ruling family in the onset of the revolutions of 2011 it was thus important to assess the domestic security, as this will enable us to understand the volatile situation from which they instigated the securitizing move.

⁹² Wyndbrandt, J. (2010) p. 292.

⁹³ Hegghammer, Thomas. 2010. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge Middle East Studies). Cambridge University Press. p. 189.

⁹⁴ Hegghammer, T. (2011) p. 81.

⁹⁵ Hegghammer, T. (2010) p. 217.

⁹⁶ Wyndbrandt, J. (2010) p. 290.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 291.

4 The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood was one of the most well established and largest Islamic organizations in Egypt until it was dissolved on October the 9th 2013. Founded in 1928 by the schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna, the organization managed to go from a minor group originating from a small city along the Nile to leading the country in which it had been persecuted throughout its turbulent existence. The main goal of the MB was the creation of an Islamic republic governed by *Sharia*. The way to achieve this was by the Islamisation of society. The group had a history of being in opposition with the Egyptian regimes. As such, its history is filled with persecution and violence, but also with accommodation and varied levels of political participation.

In the last few decades the group came to change its approach, and emphasised the importance of working within a democratic system and denounced violence as a means towards achieving their goals. Having no legal status in Egypt made them engage in the social activities, and influenced the country through active engagement in social movements and the civil society. The Arab uprisings of 2011 came to change their position radically, launching them into mainstream politics in Egypt. With the Freedom and Justice Party winning a landslide election under the auspice of the MB, positioning their candidate as the first, post authoritarian, elected President. A year later, the President was ousted and shortly after the MB was classified as a terrorist organization which eventually lead to them being dissolved.

In order to understand how the MB constitutes a threat towards Saudi Arabia, the following chapter will aim at building a baseline understanding of the origins, structure and ideological goals of the Brotherhood.

4.1 History

In the year of 1928 in the Suez Canal city of Isma'iliyya a secondary school teacher named Hasan al-Banna created what would come to be known as The Muslim Brotherhood (*Jam'a al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*). With Isma'iliyya as its base, the group rapidly started expanding its influence to the lower middle and a quickly growing working class in the cities. Four years later, 1932, the group moved its headquarters to Cairo, and shortly thereafter the first branches in the capital cities of

neighbouring countries were opened.⁹⁸ By the end of the decade, the organization had 500 branches throughout Egypt, and a membership that numbered in the tens of thousands.⁹⁹

From its origin the group characterised itself as a movement pursuing reform under the auspice of Islam. The group's initial goal was to reform the religious education, but due to the volatile political situation in Egypt during the constitutional monarchy and the looming presence of British colonialism veered it on the path towards a social movement. In this initial phase of the organization they stood out for their anti-British sentiment and a staunch opposition against the political parties in Egypt.¹⁰⁰

Analogous with Egyptian movements of its time, the MB created a paramilitary unit independent and separate from the mother organization. The group known as *al-Nizam al-Khass* (Special Unit), headed directly by Hasan al-Banna and operated as a well-structured military organization. The increasingly volatile political situation during the last years of the monarchical rule radicalized the organization and they were responsible for carrying out a number of terrorist actions, one of the more prominent being the murder of the Prime Minister in 1948. This action would be the impetus for the assassination of Hasan al-Banna, which took place a few weeks later in January 1949.¹⁰¹ The murder of the Prime Minister led the government to dissolve the MB and concomitant with the death of their leader this brought the organization to the brink of collapse. It took two years until the group felt secure enough to appoint Hasan al-Hudaybi as the successor. According to one author, this was a choice the leading circle took in order to avoid "tackling internal frictions and put off fundamental discussions on the MB's strategic and ideological direction."¹⁰² Al-Hudayabi came to lead the group for two decades through the precarious situations that were to come.

His leadership co-occurred with the coup d'état carried out by the Egyptian Free Officers. The relationship between the Brotherhood and the new regime was originally good, which could be seen in that they were the only group that was exempt from the law that dissolved all political organizations¹⁰³, and they were invited to take part in the shaping of the new government. Even so, the internal conflicts in the group and al-Hudayabi's lack of support from within the organization led to a gradual decline in their relationship with the Revolutionary Command Council.¹⁰⁴ The relationship ended when the MB was accused of the attempted assassination of Nasser in 1954. The

⁹⁸ Zollner, Barbara. 2011. The Muslim Brotherhood. *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*. In *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*. Shahram Akbarzadeh (ed.) Routledge. p. 51.

⁹⁹ Cleveland, W. (2008) p. 185.

¹⁰⁰ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 349.

¹⁰¹ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 52.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 398.

¹⁰⁴ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 58.

regime retaliated with executing six of its leaders and imprisoning thousands.¹⁰⁵ This marked the beginning of “the time of persecution”¹⁰⁶, which lasted almost 20 years during which thousands of members would be thrown in jail.¹⁰⁷

The years the organization would spend in prison came to be a critical time in the evolution of the Brotherhood. These were the years when Sayyid Qutb would create his revolutionary ideology, and raise the fundamental question whether it was legitimate to support a regime, directly or indirectly, that had left the path of Islam. The implications of his teachings came to be significant. They led to the offshoots of the MB that would condone acts of terror in order to achieve their goals. Eventually this would lead to the arrest and execution of Qutb in August 1966.¹⁰⁸ As a reaction to the June War in 1967, the Egyptian MB would come to split. The part of the organization that relinquished violence kept the name “the Muslim Brotherhood”, and the offshoot groups that adhered to Sayyid Qutb's ideology created smaller organizations such as *al-Hijrah* and *al-Jihad*.¹⁰⁹ It was followers to the teachings of Qutb that would later in 1981 assassinate Anwar al-Sadat, and that the year after in Syria would attempt to overthrow the President.¹¹⁰

With sudden death of Nasser in 1970 and the appointment of his successor Anwar al-Sadat, the Egyptian regimes policy towards the MB would radically change. The new president declared an amnesty with the aim of gaining the support he needed in order to push through economical and foreign policy related changes.

The Brotherhood denounced political violence and veered towards a path of working within the legal and political framework. The end of persecution meant that al-Hudaybi, and his successor, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, could start rebuilding the organization's strength.¹¹¹ The new President allowed the MB more freedom, he did not however lift ban of 1954. This left the organization in a precarious situation as the group was caught in a legal ambiguity, which it came to have until the uprisings of 2011. They were not allowed to engage in politics as a party, and as such had to run individual candidates.

The initial relationship between the state and the MB did not radically change when Mubarak came to power. The status quo did not however last, as the group's continued attempts to affect society through informal networks and social movements led to increasing resentment and

¹⁰⁵ Cleavland, W (2008) p. 306.

¹⁰⁶ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 446.

¹⁰⁹ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 55; See also, Cleveland, W. (2008) p. 446.

¹¹⁰ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 446.

¹¹¹ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 53.

eventually from the mid-1990s persecution.¹¹² The Brotherhood who originally had been at the forefront of militant Islamism, now represented a moderate centrist political movement. Even though religious parties were banned from creating political organizations, the MB ran individual candidates in the parliamentary elections with varied results.¹¹³ In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the group enjoyed a landslide success and won almost 20% of the seats.¹¹⁴

4.2 Ideology

There is a continuing debate regarding the ideological basis for the modern MB, specifically, whether the group condones violence as a means, or strives towards democratic political participation. The discussion is closely linked to the theological framework and different ideological interpretations.¹¹⁵

Regardless of the many leanings within the group, what they all have common is the belief in the teachings of the founder Hasan al-Banna. He visualised the Brotherhood as a movement that fused social, political personal and religious matters. The MB started as a movement of individual reform of social and moral aspects, but grew to be an all-encompassing ideology. It believed that Islam had deteriorated under Sufism, and the continued intrusion of West and its values. The cure was to be found in going back to the true teachings of Islam, and to incorporate it in every aspect of one's life. Creating an Islamic state based on Sharia was to have an impact on all layers of society. Women were to be educated and allowed to work, but some social distance should be maintained. The economy too would be reformed to reflect principles deduced from the Qur'an.¹¹⁶ His view however, was not simply to resurrect the past. He argued that Islam had always been compatible with modernity and as such sought a way to take full advantage of the new technology without straying from the values of Islam.¹¹⁷ The organization grew up as a revolutionary movement striving for change. As Hasan al-Banna said:

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Cleveland, W. (2008) p. 448.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 545.

¹¹⁵ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 54.

¹¹⁶ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 348-349.

¹¹⁷ Cleveland, W. (2008) p. 199.

If you are told that you are political, answer that Islam admits no such distinction. If you are accused of being revolutionaries, say, 'we are voices for right and for peace in which we dearly believe, and of which we are proud. If you rise against us or stand in the path of our message, then we are permitted by God to defend ourselves against your injustice.'¹¹⁸

The most challenging time when analysing the Brotherhood's ideology is the prison years of 1954-1971. During this time, the debate within the group took place on a theological field. It was during these years that Sayyid Qutb wrote his *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones Along the Way) which predominantly is associated with terrorism and radical Islam. While it is undeniable that Qutb's teachings has been the inspiration for a number of radical groups, it is paramount that one does not reduce his influence to solely these organizations.¹¹⁹

Followers of Qutb's ideological framework broke off from the Brotherhood in 1967 and created terrorist groups throughout the 1970s. These groups were adherents to the teachings of *hukm Allah* (wisdom of God), *jahiliyya* (paganism) and *jihad*, arguing that the world could be divided into two categories, true Islam and the enemy.¹²⁰ In his texts, he wrote that in order to continue to develop modern Islamic thought it was necessary to exclude foreign influences. The rulers were too incorporated in his ideology. They were to enforce morality, to uphold a just society. This included the distribution of wealth, which would be used for the betterment of society. "Wealth should not be used for luxury or usury, or in dishonest ways, it should be taxed for the benefit of society; the necessities of communal life should not be in the hands of individuals, but owned in common."¹²¹

The document *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers not Judges) was written by the Brotherhood's leadership under Hasan al-Hudaybi as a counter-narrative to the teachings of Qutb. The book outlined a principal theological base that stemmed from Islamic law. Thus, it managed to give the organization a framework that al-Banna and later Qutb had been missing in their texts.

The following decades would revolve around gradually building a strategy for its position regarding political issues. Among these are how the Brotherhood should view economic liberalization, privatization and whether it should participate in elections. In all of these issues the MB adopted a moderate stance that left the revolutionary goals of their past behind, and veered towards a democratic participation.¹²² Even so, there is a tendency within the Brotherhood to define the group as a social movement that works in constant opposition with the regime, on the basis that beliefs

¹¹⁸ Speech by Hasan al-Banna, cited in Hourani, A. (2005) p. 348.

¹¹⁹ Zollner, B. (2011) p. 55.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 54.

¹²¹ Hourani, A. (2005) p. 399.

¹²² Zollner, B. (2011) p. 55.

cannot be submerged in order to further a political agenda and that the groups should not alter its policies based on the membership.¹²³

4.3 Political Asset

The relationship between the MB and KSA has generally been good; in fact, in the 1950s the Kingdom sheltered thousands of Brothers fleeing repression from Nasser's Egypt. The Kingdom and its newfound oil wealth was in dire need of educated people in their workforce, and MB members helped serve this cause. They took positions as lawyers, engineers and teachers in the emerging educational system, effectively entrenching themselves with the Saudi society and state.¹²⁴

Nasser's aggressive regional policy in the region helped the build-up to the "Arab Cold War" which was played out by proxy forces in Yemen by Saudi Arabia and Egypt. It was during this time that the MB members took refuge in the Kingdom thus creating an alliance between the two main opponents of pan-Arabism; the domestic one—The Muslim Brotherhood, and the regional one—Saudi Arabia.¹²⁵

According to Stéphane Lacroix, the increased influence of the MB helped politicize religion in KSA and led to the emergence of Islamic groups known as Sahwa.¹²⁶ Though these groups bore varying levels of affiliation with the MB organization, one went so far as to call itself, the Saudi Muslim Brotherhood (*al-ikhwan al-muslimun al-saudiyyun*), yet they did not swear to the general guide in Egypt.

The relationship between the organization and Kingdom would remain good in the following decades, during which the MB established themselves and came to dominate the intellectual scene. Fusing the ideology of Sheikh Abdul Wahhab and teachings of the MB, leading to what is known as the *Tayyar al-Sahawi* (religious awakening). This doctrine established itself as the dominant one, and led to that the intellectual discourse for the last 30 years to become "static" owing to the overt domination of MB thought in the Kingdom.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid. p. 56.

¹²⁴ Lacroix, Stéphane (2014), *Saudi Arabia's Muslim Brotherhood predicament*. <http://pomeps.org/2014/03/20/saudi-arabias-muslim-brotherhood-predicament/> (acquired on 2014-05-18)

¹²⁵ Steinberg, Guido. (2014), *The Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood*. German Institute for International and Security Affairs <http://pomeps.org/2014/03/21/the-gulf-states-and-the-muslim-brotherhood/> (acquired on 2014-05-18)

¹²⁶ Lacroix, S. (2014)

¹²⁷ Alhussein, E.M (2012) p. 180

The first adversity that faced the relationship came in the 1990s, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. A number of Sahwa branches openly criticized King Fahd's decision to place American troops on holy soil, and started to demand radical reforms. The government responded with a crackdown that by 1994-5 had effectively crushed the campaign. A sign that the Saudi family saw the Sahwa and the MB as intrinsically linked is that they expelled several prominent MB exiles, among them Sayyid Qutb's brother Mohammad who taught at a university in Kingdom.

The relationship between the two normalized, but the state never forgot the dissent that had come from the Sahwas. After the 9/11 attack KSA's religious establishment came under immense international pressure as 15 out of 19 hijackers was from the Kingdom. Wahhabism came under scrutiny as it was said to be breeding extremists. In an attempt to protect its version of Islam the then interior minister, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud denounced the Brotherhood, saying it was guilty of "betrayal of pledges and ingratitude" and openly accusing them of being "the source of all problems in the Islamic world"¹²⁸ in an attempt to demonize the Brotherhood.

The next few years would ease the tension between the two and the Sahwa became reintegrated into Saudi society, in exchange for not criticising the regime. This was not merely a sign of a more accommodating stance by the government, but also an attempt to utilize an existing framework to gain legitimacy.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Washington Post (2004) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12823-2004Sep10_3.html (acquired on 2014-05-19)

¹²⁹ Lacroix, S. (2014)

5 The Metamorphosis; the transformation of a Brotherhood

The act of securitizing an issue is a move made out of insecurity, a sense of weakness, and not from a position of strength. “Security and insecurity are the results of the process of securitization, or more adequately: (in)securitization.”¹³⁰ Therefore, in order to effectively analyse Saudi Arabia’s political shift vis-à-vis the MB it is paramount to understand that the policy was not created in a vacuum, but rather that it was a confluence of events. Hence, this chapter will firstly examine the situation that faced the Kingdom in the onset of the Arab-uprisings. It will then examine whether a securitization has been successful, and, if it was, how this affected the mutual accommodation between the Kingdom and the Brotherhood.

5.1 Regionally

Both domestically and regionally, the Kingdom has showed great counterrevolutionary sentiment. With the fall of leaders in Egypt and Tunisia, unrest in Yemen and Bahrain, Saudi Arabia started feeling asphyxiated and did not hesitate to engage in counterrevolutionary measures. No more so than in Bahrain, its eastern neighbour. The country of Bahrain’s is predominantly Shia Islamic, governed by a Sunni Monarchy that has showed unwillingness to open up for reform. The events of 2011 produced great anxiety for the ruling elites in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The fall of a friendly autocratic regime in Egypt pushed the royal family to take action in order to stem the domino effect. Soon 1,500 men from the Saudi National Guard entered Bahrain to clamp down violently on the protesters. In the time that followed thousands of protesters were arrested, disappeared, tortured and dozens were killed.¹³¹

The Kingdom effectively showed that no diminishment in the power of a monarch would be permitted. The protection of the status quo became paramount for the Kingdom that attempted to get in front of revolutionary movements in Yemen and Syria, and lending its support to the monarchies in Morocco and Jordan. In an ad hoc manner inviting them to join the GCC, without regarding their geographical position, with great financial benefits for the two kingdoms.¹³²

¹³⁰ Bigo, D. (2008) p. 124.

¹³¹ Wynbrandt, J. (2010) p. 240.

¹³² Gause, G. (2011b) p. 15.

5.2 Domestically

The Kingdom felt a surge of unrest on its domestic scene, and fears that the spring would take root led to moves designed to decisively clamp down and crush those inclined to campaign against the ruling family.

The Kingdom shared several of the deficit areas that characterised the countries in which the revolutions took root. Among these were socio-economic disparities, a high level of unemployment and problems with integrating the new generations of workers. There is an immense gap between those who were well off and those who were not. Recent reformative trends in the Kingdom with calls for more elective government and a reform of the religious establishment. This coupled with an abhorrent democratic deficit.

The confluence of issues led to an insecurity that had to be addressed. Thus, King Abdullah started a heavy spending spree in the country in an attempt to quell potential dissent. With the spree amounting to \$130 billion in domestic incentives to keep the revolutionary ideas away. The biggest share went towards a housing project, where the King announced a plan to build five hundred thousand new houses over the coming years and to make it easier to receive housing-loans. The incentive also included a onetime blank payment amounting to two months' salary for all governmental employees, military personnel and retirees. The minimum wage was increased for the people working in the governmental sphere, alongside the introduction of unemployment benefits.¹³³

With the onset of potential dissident in the Kingdom, the ruling family played a familiar hand in their attempts to pre-emptively disrupt the spring breeze, the clergy. The *'ulama* shared the ruling family's desire to maintain the status quo, whilst "preventing the realization of democratic transformation".¹³⁴ Thus, in early 2011 the grand mufti, the highest religious position in the country, labelled the demonstrations taking place in the Arab world as "destructive acts of chaos" incited by the enemies of Islam.¹³⁵ Just a month later the Council of Senior Clerics, the highest religious body in the Kingdom, released a statement declaring demonstrations as forbidden.¹³⁶ This method of Saudi counterrevolutionary approach has long been the part of the Kingdoms political and military arsenal in curbing unrest. Toby C. Jones describes it,

Saudi politics has been based on outmanoeuvring calls for political transformation, on preserving a system of political economic privilege...and on

¹³³ Gause, G. (2011b) p. 6.

¹³⁴ Jones, T. (2011) p. 51.

¹³⁵ Gause, G. (2011b) p. 8.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

unleashing the forces of radicalism and sectarianism to insure the survival of the Kingdom's ruling clique.¹³⁷

With the onset of the Arab revolutions, the Sahwa movements saw their chance to make a political stance, and published several open petitions requesting reforms. A number of esteemed and leading Sahwa figures signed these, and in March 2013 Salman al-Awda, one of the signatories, sent an open letter to the King continuing the requests made earlier.¹³⁸ The apparent backing of the reform movement by the Sahwa reawakened the King's fears. Thus, when an Islamic regime came to power in Egypt the Saudi regime dreaded that this would make their own Islamist groups feel emboldened.

With the ousting of President Mursi in Egypt, the Saudi regime's position became even more perilous. Throughout the summer, the major Sahwa figures in the country made statements and signed petitions denouncing the coup. Mohammad bin Nasir al-Suhaybani held a sermon in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, cursing the supporters of the coup and declaring that the bloodshed is on their hands.¹³⁹ This generated a hashtag that quickly gained popularity ("Shaykh Suhaybani represents me") concomitant with the hashtag "King Abdullah's speech does not represent me" which started seeing use after the King held a speech in which he strongly endorsed the ousting of President Mursi.¹⁴⁰ On August the 8th 2013, 56 sheikhs, some known to be affiliated with the Saudi Muslim Brotherhood, denounced the "removal of a legitimately elected president" and claiming that those who partook were "taking part in committing a sin and an aggression forbidden by the laws of Islam"¹⁴¹

5.3 Securitizing religion

These episodes were perceived as the realization of the regimes worst fears. A domestic group, with ties to their regional counterpart, feeding of each other and challenging the political legitimacy of

¹³⁷ Jones, T.C. (2011) p. 44.

¹³⁸ Salman al-Sawda (2013) <http://twitmail.com/email/78010944/6/> (Acquired on 2014-05-13)

¹³⁹ Lynch, Marc. (2013) Gulf Islamist Dissent over Egypt. *Foreign Policy*. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/08/18/gulf_islamist_dissent_over_egypt (Acquired on 2014-05-12) Seen in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=desfNSSjd4k>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Lacroix, S. (2014)

the Saudi state was a threat with saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects. The regime's response came on February the 4th 2014, when a royal decree was released stating:

belonging to intellectual or religious trends or groups that are extremist or categorized as terrorist at the local, regional or international level, as well supporting them, or showing sympathy for their ideas and methods in whichever way, or expressing support for them through whichever means, or offering them financial or moral support, or inciting others to do any of this or promoting any such actions in word or writing¹⁴²

Doing so would result in a prison sentence “of no less than three years and no more than twenty years.”¹⁴³ The speech act had been instigated by the regime with a royal decree endorsing the designation of the MB as a terrorist group. It also forbade people from expressing any form of sympathy for the group whilst at the same time functioning as a threat to similar entities.

The campaign against the ideological threat would peak a month later when the regime on March 8 released a list of all the groups the Kingdom perceived as terrorist groups, among them the Muslim Brotherhood. The declaration continued by stating that all groups deemed similar in action, word and ideology would also be treated as terrorists.¹⁴⁴

The object of the speech act was the Kingdom's source of political legitimacy, namely religion. There are three major reasons why the referent object is religion and not the ruling family or regime (the actor). Firstly, the referent object is predominantly another entity besides the actor, due to the difficulty in justifying the protection of oneself.¹⁴⁵ Hence the securitization of another, in this case religion. Secondly, scholars have for a long time tried to analyze the religious and cultural aspects of the Kingdom separately from the political. This Eurocentric perspective of analyzing the Kingdom is faulty, as the religious and political identity go hand in hand and have been inseparable since the creation of the state.¹⁴⁶ Thirdly, and chiefly, the perceived threat is posed against the political legitimacy of the regime and not against the regime as an entity. Even though the insecurity stemming from the threat is with enough salience to be perceived as existential against not only the regime, but also the political security of said regime. This could be seen in the MB (and Sahwa groups in anyway affiliated with the organization) gaining the same threat classification as al-Qaeda. The king's message was clear, zero tolerance for anyone who use Islam in order to pursue a political agenda.

¹⁴² <http://alhayat.com/Details/599682> (Acquired on 2014-05-12). Quote translated by author.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ <http://almesryoon.com/السياسية/407713-إرهابية-جماعة-الإخوان-بإدراج-السعودية-قر-ار-نص-ننشر-407713> (acquired on 2014-05-19)

¹⁴⁵ Buzan, B. (et.al) (1998) p. 40-41.

¹⁴⁶ Alhussein, E.M. (2012) p. 181.

Thus far, what we have witnessed is the securitizing move by the actor, but a securitizing move does not constitute a successful securitization. The last component required in order to compose a securitization is the audience accepting the issue as a threat with enough saliency to legitimate extraordinary measures. But, as Buzan (et.al) describes it: “accept does not necessarily mean in civilized, dominance-free discussion; it only means that an order always rests on coercion as well as on consent.”¹⁴⁷ An acceptance taking this form could be found in the “day of rage” where more than 34.000 people had on an anti-government Facebook page showed support for protests that were to take place in Saudi Arabia on March 9th 2011.¹⁴⁸ The day was to be a call for change in the Kingdom. The protests that were to take place never materialised. A combination of religious calls deeming protest as un-Islamic, recent crackdown on protesters where two people were shot, and a large presence of coercive force on the day in question effectively quelled the protests.¹⁴⁹

The hashtags (see chapter 5.2) that gained popularity after the King endorsed the ousting of Mursi could be seen as a rejection of the securitizing move, as part of the public explicitly stated “King Abdullah’s speech does not represent me”. However, in the immediate aftermath of the speech a hashtag campaign was launched declaring “the King represent me”, with the Saudi press declaring it a big success. Whether this was an attempt the state made in order to portray a people in harmony with the royal family, or it was an actual –non-state supported—campaign the facts remain the same; the Kingdom has taken extraordinary measures in declaring the MB a terrorist organization and be it by coercion or consent the audience has accepted the move. The Kingdom has thus, in this case, achieved a successful securitization of their source of political legitimacy, namely religion.

5.4 Politicized and securitized: asset and/or threat

In the 1950s and 60s when the MB arrived in Saudi Arabia they were an invaluable asset to the Kingdom for several reason; the rapidly expanding educational system was in dire need of teachers

¹⁴⁷ Buzan, B. (et.al) (1998) p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Abouzeid, Rania. (2011) *Saudi Arabia’s ‘Day of Rage’ Passes Quietly*.
<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2058486,00.html>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Cf. also Black, Ian. (2011) *Saudi Arabian security forces quell ‘day of rage’ protests*.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/11/saudi-arabia-police-quell-protests>

and the immigrating Brothers came to fill this need. The ideological threat that was posed by Nasser was countered by King Faysal's elegant use of Islamic rhetoric. The role as the protector of Sunni Islam that KSA held in the regional arena was further enhanced by the Kingdom accepting the Brotherhood's refugees and accommodating them in society. The ruling family's ability to call upon the Sahwas when in need of further legitimization in the face of a religious issue has been a constituting principle of the organization as an asset.

The last 40 years of enhancing the *salafi* movements inside the Kingdom has increased the religious belief in a pure Islamic state. This has proven to be both positive and negative for the state. It helped them to contain secularist tendencies, and spread sectarian strife in the Kingdom. While lately, some salafists has shown support for an electoral government, which is a major step away from the old label of "un-Islamic".¹⁵⁰ The idea of active participation of salafi groups in politics is however a major concern for the ruling family, as they have continuously justified its lack of democracy on their interpretation of Islam.

The mutual accommodation between the MB and the domestic religious ideology was possible when the Brotherhood was not in a position to pose any form of threat. Nevertheless, with the organization coming to power in Egypt they were immediately perceived as a potential threat towards the Sunni hegemony that Saudi enjoyed. Simultaneously with this came the calls for reform from the Sahwa movements who were associated with the MB, openly questioning the regime's actions regarding the coup in Egypt. The simultaneous pressure from two sources—Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the domestic Sahwa movements—lead to the regime securitizing religion in order to maintain the primacy of the ruling family and its interests.

If the Muslim Brotherhood then gained power through an electoral system in Egypt, was allowed to sit a full elective period and had showed that its ideology was a functioning way to an Islamic state, it would devastate the ideological power that the Kingdom has. This would in effect render Saudi sentiment about being the sole protector of Sunni Islamic values moot, and displays that it is possible to merge Islamic and democratic values. A strong Muslim Brotherhood would as such be a threat to the Saudi regime's ideological power, hence a threat to their survival.

¹⁵⁰ Gauze, G. (2011b) p. 20.

6 Conclusion

Saudi Arabia changed its perception of the Muslim Brotherhood due to the perceived ideological threat they posed towards the political security of the regime.

At a quick glance, it would perhaps have been seemingly more logical if Saudi Arabia had sided with the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, this dissertation has attempted to look beyond the initial shift of policy and examine the historical insecurity of the Saudi regime, and how this correlate with their foreign policy. The finding was a Kingdom that perceived ideological threats to the supremacy of the ruling family as decisive security issues.

By examining the events that took place in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, we identified the components needed in order to constitute a securitization move, and by looking at the reaction of the audience, we observed a successful securitization. Thus, the dissertation proved the hypothesis.

By applying the theory of securitization, this dissertation analysed how Saudi Arabia altered its perception of the Muslim Brotherhood under politicized and later securitized religion. In a politicized religious environment, the Brotherhood brought with it a number of beneficial elements and as such functioned as an asset for the Kingdom. They aided in building legitimacy for the regime, and acted as way for the ruling family to assert influence in the regional arena. With the securitization they became a liability to the supremacy of the regime, as they threatened the religious hegemony of the al-Saud family.

The findings in this dissertation correlate to a high degree with those of Gregory Gause. Saudi Arabia's regional balance of power act cannot be reduced to a materialistic balance of power. Rather they have walked a line of managing internal and international interests to maintain a status quo. However, there is a sense of insecurity that has driven the foreign policy of the regime, which is derived from their historical perception of threats.

The theory of Securitization was a valuable asset in analysing the recent changes in KSA's foreign policy. It brought with it a framework that granted a new lens through which to analyse the situation. The strength of the theory could also be said to be its weakness, namely, that it is focused solely on the shifting issue in the moment it is transformed from a politicized issue towards a securitized. Hence, the theory pays no heed to why an issue is seen as existential, or whether it really is. It exclusively examines the process of making security, and not the underlying factors that are the cause for the need of securitization.

Saudi Arabia has managed to maintain its security interest due to immense oil wealth, and ideological legitimacy deriving from religion. While several studies have been done regarding the

security of oil, dollar diplomacy and there is an apparent lack on religious security and its implications. This dissertation makes the claim that Saudi Arabia has securitized religion in order to protect its political legitimacy. By adding this dimension into the field of security studies, in the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we broaden the scope of what security as an academic field can constitute. This opens up new layers of potential analysis. What impact will securitization have on the religious identity in the Kingdom? How will this affect the sectarian divide in the Kingdom? Questions like these could potentially be the basis for future studies.

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