

Why Saudi Arabia Resists The Drive for Utopian War

by Hussein Askary

Saudi Arabia is known as the land of Islam's two holiest sites: Al-Ka'aba in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madinah. It is also the world's largest oil exporter with a production capacity of up to 8 million barrels per day. It is one of the United States' main allies in the Mideast since President Franklin Roosevelt established that relationship with King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud in 1945. Any strategic decision it takes affects a world Muslim population of 1 billion, and at the same time the world economy.

From now until mid-February, almost 2 million Muslims from around the world would gather in Mecca for the annual pilgrimage season, one of the most sacred times for Muslims. If the United States and Britain were to carry out any military adventure in Iraq in this period, it will be regarded by most Muslims as part of a "new crusade" against Islam; the "coalition" shall have to reckon with political and security chaos in the whole Gulf region, Egypt, and probably Turkey, and an earthquake in the world economy. This would set the stage for a real "Clash of Civilizations."

Thus the Saudi Kingdom's position on the Iraqi issue has been a matter of much speculation, and a subject of massive psychological warfare. The Saudi leadership has tried vehemently to explain its position on this matter, even establishing for that purpose a new Foreign Ministry institution—weekly press conferences by Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal.

At his press conference on Jan. 7, Prince Saud reiterated Saudi Arabia's opposition to a war in Iraq, but in stronger terms than he had before. Asked about Saudi participation in a U.S.-motivated war against Iraq, he emphasized: "If the United States asks us to join the war, we would not join"; but "If the United Nations asks Saudi Arabia to join, depending on the material breach that they show and depending on the proof that they show, Saudi Arabia will take a decision based on its interests." Prince Saud told the reporters: "We are inter-

ested in peace and searching for a peaceful [solution] to this crisis, and even if the United Nations decides on war, we want them to give us a last chance to exert efforts for peace." Asked if the United States had requested military facilities, Prince Saud said: "Concerning Iraq, it has not asked."

Prince Saud and other Saudi officials have already refuted remarks by U.S. defense officials who told Reuters at the end of December, that Riyadh had agreed to allow the United States to use its air bases, and an important operations center, in a possible war with Iraq. The Reuters report had originated from an interview with U.S. Air Force chief Gen. John P. Jumper, covered in the *New York Times* in late December. Jumper was characterized as one of the supporters of "the Wolfowitz school" of a quick air and special operations war against Baghdad. This characterization appeared in the Dec. 18 *Washington Post* report featuring the complaints of U.S. Army generals against Wolfowitz and other civilian "chicken-hawks" in the Pentagon who want to rush into a war without considering the risks involved.

Al-Riyadh reported that Prince Saud "called for exerting all efforts to solve the Iraqi crisis through diplomatic and political channels. He warned strongly that launching a military attack against Iraq could lead the whole region into an ambiguous future."

Prince Saud denied any knowledge of an initiative calling on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to step down as one of the political solutions, and he added that military action to change the regime in Iraq would lead to civil wars with consequences affecting the whole region. He stressed once again that the United States has not asked the Saudi government to provide bases and military support for an eventual attack against Iraq; he expressed optimism regarding recent statements made by President Bush, placing the war option as a last resort, and commended Bush's earlier step to turn the whole Iraqi issue to the UN, rather than acting unilaterally.



Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal (right) has instituted weekly briefings in Riyadh to make clear the continued Saudi opposition to any invasion of Iraq. A deeper debate is occurring in Saudi Arabia: on the potential of the LaRouche factor in changing U.S. policy.

Rules and Exceptions: LaRouche's Role

There is a general official consensus among Arab nations on the necessity of pursuing all political and diplomatic avenues to avoid a war in Iraq. On the public level, the rejection of an American-British war, and the reaction to the continuing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people is reaching an explosive level.

Nonetheless, every rule has exceptions. The exception here is related to a small but interesting phenomenon: an Arab and Muslim Baby-Boomer syndrome. A group of loosely connected, Baby-Boomer-aged Arab and Muslim "intellectuals," educated in the United States and Europe, has emerged as a sort of "Uncle Tom brigade," singing in chorus the glories of globalization and American efforts to "democratize and civilize" Arab and Muslim nations through occupation wars and military governors. They are driven by fears generated by Sept. 11, and some have strange agendas and connections, supported by some doubting and terrified people within the Arab world's elite.

These Arab Baby Boomers were given three messages: 1) Fall before the "almighty new U.S. Empire," or the revenge for Sept. 11 shall haunt you; 2) There are no moral or intellectual American traditions you could invoke to avoid the wrath of the American Empire, there are only oil interests; and, 3) Forget Lyndon LaRouche! Recently, this current has directed its frustration against the American intellectual and Democratic Presidential pre-candidate LaRouche, who has become a household name in most Arab countries, and especially in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, esteemed as the "moral and reasonable voice of America."

Three specific attacks on LaRouche have appeared in the Arabic press recently. Jamal Ahmed Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi journalist, argued in an article published in Kuwait

and Lebanon in December, that although he does not know LaRouche well, he would advise Arabs to stay away from him, and to stick to "mainstream Washington" in spite of its racist "hatred against Arabs"—or, to look for friends in the extreme right and extreme left! The clear message: anything but LaRouche. This silly diatribe was considered an unwelcome "rant" by Arab readers, who felt that it was written for an English-speaking audience and to please U.S. Ambassadors in the region. Refutation of it was well received in many Arabic newspapers and on the Internet, including in Saudi Arabia itself.

Two other cases are even stranger. On Dec. 17, the Saudi daily *Asharq Al-Awsat* published two articles side by side, one by Iranian author Amir Taheri, and the second by Egyptian-American Mamoun Fandy. They were ostensibly about the discarded Defense Policy Board "lecturer" Laurent Murawiec, who attacked Saudi Arabia as a sponsor of terrorism and called for the United States to threaten to seize Saudi oil fields and freeze Saudi assets as part of the war against terrorism. The two writers are typical of the new Muslim Baby-Boomer phenomenon. Although the two articles appeared on the same page, and their authors had discussed them with each other beforehand, Taheri called LaRouche a right-wing extremist, while Fandy called him a left-wing extremist.

Muslim 'Neo-Cons' Attacking LaRouche

These two protectors of Saudi Arabia have question marks on their own activity. Amir Taheri is an Iranian working as a staff writer with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, but also as a "prominent Middle East expert" in many neo-conservative American and Israeli publications, where he is promoted like Murawiec. In addition to being a pro-Iraq war and regime-change advocate, Taheri writes for the Buckley family's *National Review*, the

Jerusalem Post, *Washington Times*, *New York Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*. The public relations website Benador Associates promotes Taheri and other “experts,” such as: Alexander Haig, James Woolsey, Richard Perle, Charles Krauthammer, Michael Ledeen, Laurie Mylroie, John Eibner (of Christian Solidarity International), Meyrav Wurmser, and Frank Gaffney. This is as close as you get to the Clash of Civilizations crusade against Islam, and to America’s pro-fascist right wing.

Mamoun Fandy, who is now employed by Washington’s National Defense University, has himself been involved in anti-Saudi propaganda, building for himself a reputation in the 1990s as an expert on “political dissent” in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly Fandy was one of the speakers at the Hudson Institute’s Saudi-bashing seminar “Oil, Terrorism and the Problem of Saudi Arabia” sponsored by Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) on June 18, 2002—long before Murawiec was brought to the stage by Richard Perle. Fandy sat next to the fanatic adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Dore Gold. Speaking in the same session were Jeffrey Gedmin, Director of the Aspen Institute Berlin; Simon Henderson, author of *After King Fahd—Succession in Saudi Arabia*; David Pryce-Jones and Stephen Schwartz, senior editor and columnist, respectively, of the fascist *National Review*.

Listening to sometimes racist diatribes against Arabs and particularly Saudis, the strongest defense Fandy could put forth was that some Saudis are changing their ways after Sept. 11, from being pro-bin Laden fanatics to becoming liberals. The only person who rang the alarm bells about the dangerous suggestions being discussed in that seminar was an *EIR* reporter speaking from the audience. *EIR*, a year earlier, had warned in *Asharq al-Awsat* against an American-British trend to provoke confrontation with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab allies. *EIR* had pointed to the group which later, with Mamoun Fandy among them, launched the attack from the Hudson Institute and Defense Policy Board.

The Trusted American

LaRouche’s input in the efforts to stop the war and madness has become a fact of life in the tumultuous Middle East. Three days after the Taheri-Fandy articles in *Asharq al-Awsat*, the same newspaper published an op-ed by Bassam Abu Sharif, a prominent Palestinian political figure and long-time associate and adviser of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Abu Sharif cited LaRouche as the man who could explain why the Bush Administration is almost paralyzed in the face of Sharon’s criminal policies, despite U.S. initiatives the past two years to control the violence and foster productive negotiations. Abu Sharif wrote: “The Palestinian people are subjected every day to war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces. So, why doesn’t the U.S. President order the dispatching of international peace-keeping forces or American military forces to protect the Palestinian people on one side and to provide security for the Israeli people on the other (which is Sharon’s pretext to continue the

crimes against the Palestinian people)? The explanation may lie in what former Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche has declared. . . . ‘The U.S. President is subject to a dangerous plot by the agents of Israel inside the White House. The plans to attack Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime were presented by the agents of Israel and were rejected by President Clinton in 1996. Those agents returned in order to put Bush in the same trap outlined by Israel in 1996.’ ” His reference is to LaRouche’s campaign release “The Pollard Affair Never Ended,” from which he quoted extensively (see *EIR*, Sept. 20, 2002).

In Saudi Arabia in particular, and the Gulf in general, LaRouche’s analysis and political campaigns to shift U.S. policies towards more sanity have continued to be a matter of widespread discussion in the press. An interview with LaRouche conducted by Saudi writer Nora Al-Saad was featured in *Al-Riyadh* on four consecutive days in late December. LaRouche identified the three main currents in modern Judaism: The great legacy of Moses Maimonides and Moses Mendelssohn; the modern “labor Zionist” movements typified by Nahum Goldmann and David Ben-Gurion; and the Jabotinskyite fascist tradition of Sharon and Netanyahu’s Likud. The dialogue aroused a healthy debate on U.S. policy in the region and LaRouche’s role in that. The discussion was widely reported on the website of *Al-Riyadh*, which republished Al-Saad’s rebuttal of Khashoggi’s attack and other criticisms of LaRouche. She welcomed the many responses to the article, and said, “The voice, which Mr. LaRouche represents, is the voice that will rise and prevail. Even if not immediately now, it will do eventually. As for the doubting ones amongst us, let it suffice that the masks, behind which they have been hiding, have fallen off their faces.”

Another Saudi daily, *Al-Watan*, in early January also continued coverage of LaRouche’s revelations of the Likud dirty-money scandals in Israel’s elections, and their extension and impact inside the United States. *Al-Watan* published LaRouche’s warning against a potential attempt by Sharon to provoke a regional war before the Jan. 28 elections. Other debates, articles, and interviews with LaRouche continued to be featured in the Arabic press in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Lebanon, and the occupied Palestinian territories.

So broad is this discussion, that the Arab nations are starting to recognize a potential force inside the United States working for the common good of nations on the basis of a community of principles and missions, not oil or pragmatic superpower geopolitics. This has contributed to strengthening the position of certain countries against Anglo-American policies that are not just, rather than giving them the automatic support the Utopian faction has expected. This has contributed to blocking a hasty White House decision on invading Iraq, and pushed Bush to reconsider his options in this crisis.

The necessary further step, is to insist the American President listen to “the American voice of reason.”