

# Washington and Riyadh Square Off

by Jeffrey Steinberg

April 27—In late March of this year, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin-Abdul Aziz dispatched Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, the longtime Saudi Ambassador to the United States, who is now his National Security Advisor, to Pakistan, China, and India. According to senior U.S. intelligence sources, while in Beijing, Bandar delivered a personal message from King Abdullah to China's President Hu Jintao, proposing a strategic partnership with the People's Republic, at the very same time that Riyadh was distancing itself from Washington. At least implicit in the offer was a guarantee of a free flow of Saudi oil to China—in return for China breaking its ties with Saudi Arabia's chief regional rival, the Shi'ite Islamic Republic of Iran.

In Islamabad, Bandar reportedly arranged to have two divisions of the Pakistani Army placed on call for service in Saudi Arabia, should there be any need to crack down on popular protests. When Saudi Arabia, acting on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), sent troops and tanks into Bahrain to crush the popular revolt there, Pakistan provided 1,000 new recruits to the Bahraini National Guard—all veterans of the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

While Bandar was on his official mission to the three Asian nations, Saudi Arabia was cutting back crude oil production by a reported 800,000 barrels per day. This cutback, at a time when speculators were driving up the price of oil on world markets, through a quadrupling of futures contracts, added to the oil price inflation, delivered a not-so-subtle message to the Obama Administration in Washington: Drop your support for reforms in the Sunni Arab world, or face the economic and strategic consequences.

According to one top U.S. intelligence official, at the same time, the Saudis were also activating paid assets within Pakistan's Army and ISI to demand the shutdown of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly those operations targeted against the ISI- and Saudi-backed Haqqani network, a key component of the Taliban-centered insurgencies in both countries.

Again, according to the source, the Saudi intent was to squeeze the United States and force a pullback from support for meaningful reforms in Saudi Arabia's sphere of influence, including inside the Kingdom itself, and within the Saudi-dominated Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Haqqani network, which evolved out of the 1980s Anglo-American sponsored Afghan mujahideen operations, is a particular target of American anger, following the assault on a remote CIA outpost in Khost, Afghanistan last year, in which all the CIA personnel were killed. The Haqqani network was widely believed responsible for that atrocity, and other targeted attacks on U.S. military and CIA personnel. The Haqqani network, strongly backed by both the Saudis and by ISI, is also in the center of the Afghan opium trade.

In short, Saudi Arabia has all but declared war on U.S. policy throughout the Sunni Islamic world, from the Maghreb region of North Africa to Afghanistan and Pakistan. And London is backing Riyadh every step along the way.

## Bandar and Al-Yamamah

While some foolish Washington neocons, like former Cheney Vice Presidential aide John Hannah, have recently argued that the United States should boost Prince Bandar as "Washington's man in Riyadh," to smooth over frayed Washington-Riyadh ties, the reality is that Prince Bandar has, throughout his career, been a reliable ally and asset of London's MI6. It was, after all, Bandar who brokered the 1985 Anglo-Saudi Al-Yamamah barter deal, through which hundreds of billions of dollars in bribes passed between London and top Saudi Defense Ministry and royal family figures, and through which an offshore \$100 billion slush fund for global Anglo-Saudi covert operations was created.

Those Al-Yamamah funds, to this day, finance a global Sykes-Picot insurgency, aimed at securing British imperial control over the entire Southwest, South, and Central Asian theater, in a 21st-Century replay of London's Great Game. During a recent visit to Kyrgyzstan, Britain's Prince Andrew, the Duke of York,

openly boasted that London was engaged in a new Great Game in Central Asia, and that “this time,” London would come out the undisputed winner. Implicit in Andrew’s impolitic boasting: The United States would be the biggest loser.

Today, the centerpiece of that Anglo-Saudi Great Game is London’s drive to manipulate a permanent war within the Islamic world, between Sunnis and Shi’ites. The Saudi-Iran conflict is the centerpiece of that strategy, which involves a reconsolidation of London’s longstanding “Sunni Stability Belt” policy of support for military dictators and monarchs throughout the region.

More immediately, the crux of the Anglo-Saudi strategic arrangement is the crushing of every single revolt, from Tunisia to Egypt to Libya, and especially in the heart of the Gulf region—Bahrain, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia itself. Even in cases like Yemen and Libya, where it appears that a nominal regime change is being forced by events, the goal of the Anglo-Saudi combination has been to ensure that the incoming regime continues to be a controlled asset.

This Anglo-Saudi policy is at odds with U.S. institu-

tions, which are convinced that, without meaningful reform, the entire extended Arab/Islamic world will be the scene of a permanent war/permanent revolution, on the model of Britain’s early 20th-Century intelligence operative, Alexander Helphand, otherwise known by his *nom de guerre*, “Parvus.”

### The Obama Complication

The U.S. role in the mass-strike process that has swept the Arab/Islamic world since the January eruption of protests in Tunisia has been greatly complicated by the fact that U.S. President Barack Obama is under the dominant influence of Wall Street and London. Indeed, the Obama Administration has been more of a battleground between American patriotic circles and British-steered Presidential advisors than any kind of coherent expression of genuine U.S. national security interests. This has confused allies and adversaries alike for months, and further diminished the U.S. influence in the region from the Maghreb, through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In particular, Presidential advisors Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and Samantha Power, a White House aide and close personal friend of both Barack and Michelle Obama, have been leading proponents of a post-Westphalian British Fabian doctrine now referred to as “R2P”—“Responsibility to Protect,” which argues that there is an absolute limit on national sovereignty, justifying international military intervention whenever a regime turns on its people.

On the basis of the R2P dogma, Rice and Power argued forcefully for U.S. military engagement in Libya, to overthrow the Qaddafi regime. This policy was sharply opposed by Defense Secretary Robert Gates for several reasons. First, Gates argued that there is no significant U.S. national security interest at stake in Libya. Gates insisted that there be no U.S. involvement in the military operations, now aimed at the overthrow of Qaddafi. At a speech earlier this year at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Gates had bluntly repeated Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s warning against American involvement in any land wars in Asia, adding both the Middle East and Africa to that warning.

Gates is, according to senior intelligence sources close to the Secretary, committed to ending the U.S. engagement in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and to ensuring that American troops deployed in those two long wars must be brought home. He is advocating a scale-back in the size of both the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps to

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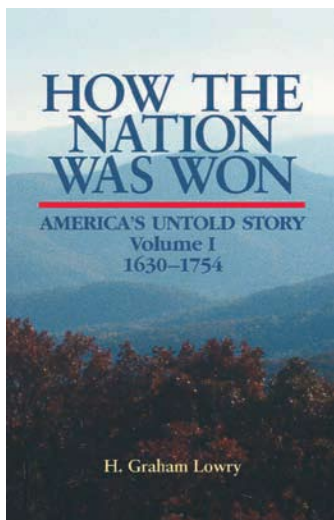
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*FDR's diplomatic approach Saudi King Ibn Saud (the two are shown here at Great Bitter Lake in Egypt, Feb. 14, 1945) was directed against Britain's plans to reimpose its Sykes-Picot imperial controls over the world's oil supply in the Persian Gulf after World War II. FDR pushed for a policy of agricultural development and water management infrastructure to bring the Saudi Kingdom into the 20th Century.*

assure that no future President can launch an irresponsible war without having to go to the American people and Congress to reinstate the draft.

Gates lost the Libya fight to the Rice-Power combination, and sources close to the Secretary indicate that this may have hastened his departure date from the Administration. (As this issue of *EIR* is going to press, there are news reports that President Obama will appoint current CIA Director Leon Panetta as Gates' replacement as Secretary of Defense, and replace Panetta with current Afghan Commander Gen. David Petraeus.)

Gates, along with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, has also argued that the United States must support meaningful reforms in the Arab world, in response to the growing wave of protests. The U.S. has earned the wrath of both the British and the Saudis for pressing for a transition to constitutional monarchy in Bahrain, Jordan, and other Sunni kingdoms, and for even more dramatic constitutional political reforms in Egypt, an Arab nation with a large skilled and educated population, a depth of civil and political institutions, and a history, dating back to the Nasser period, of economic development plans that can transform the North Africa-Eastern Mediterranean region into a global agri-

cultural breadbasket.

It is on this issue of political and economic reform that the fault lines between Washington and Riyadh have been the deepest, and it is on the basis of Washington's promotion of political reform that Riyadh has launched its campaign of pressure, bordering on asymmetric warfare.

### **FDR Speaks from the Grave**

In February 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt held an historic meeting aboard a U.S. battleship anchored off the coast of Egypt, with Saudi Arabia's first monarch, King Ibn Saud. FDR understood the deep cultural gap separating the United States and the new Saudi Kingdom, but he understood that Saudi Arabia was the only Persian Gulf oil producer where the United States had a toe-hold against the British. The U.S. President knew that if the British reestablished their near-total control over

Persian Gulf oil flows after the war, the United States would be unable to prevent the full restoration of the British colonial empire. Roosevelt courted the Saudi monarch, and later sent American agronomists and engineers to the kingdom to build a modern system of infrastructure, as a key first step towards the transformation of Saudi Arabia from feudalism to nationhood. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill went berserk over FDR's intrusion, but failed miserably to reverse the American foothold.

Nevertheless, with the death of Franklin Roosevelt just two months after his meeting with the Saudi monarch, British subversion of the American policy towards Saudi Arabia was largely successful, despite the fact that the kingdom's economic development did proceed.

The gap between Washington and Riyadh, constantly pushed by London, culminating in the Al-Yammah deal of 1985 to the present, has grown to the point, now, that the British are poised to subvert the Arab revolt by manipulating the Saudis into a permanent war with Iran, and a new Hundred Years religious war inside Islam between Shi'ites and Sunnis.

And all the while, President Obama is completely in the dark as to what is going on.