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Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm

Donald H. Estes

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Notwithstanding, this is a valuable section for its historical content.

The author tackles the challenging task of determining what causes Africa's wars. He states that the roots lie in "what many scholars now acknowledge to be a problem with the African state," suggesting an institutional deficiency. This approach is buttressed with a brief discourse on the widening gap between the African state and society. I would counter that the problem is human failure, and I have to point no further than to Idi Amin, Haile-Mariam Mengistu, and Sese Seko Mubutu, among others, to make my case. (However, I do realize this introduces the "chicken and egg" argument.)

The work's methodology is descriptive-historical, which is entirely appropriate. I am not encouraged with attempts to quantify such a fluid subject as war—mankind's greatest concentration of collective passion—especially Africa's bloody manifestations. However, focusing on Africa's wars since 1980 does pose a problem. A thorough review of such a complex subject would benefit from a wider perspective. After all, most of Africa's wars can be traced back to colonial machinations, and most of the current battles are recurrences of long conflicts whose origins lie in pre-independence structures.

The two concluding chapters are especially strong. They provide a useful assessment of positive attempts and proposed methods to reduce the number of Africa's wars, and although Copson sees some favorable trends, he maintains that poverty will undermine whatever progress is made through better government—a sober view.

The informed expert will find a wealth of new historical commentary in this work but will want larger elaboration of certain topics. Military advisors will find valuable records of the wars in a Third World political context but very little on competing strategies or battlefield tactics. Notwithstanding, due to its broad—albeit selective—coverage, this work would be an excellent addition to the classroom. Therein lies its greatest value.

KARL P. MAGYAR
Air Command and Staff College
Maxwell Air Force Base

Wilson, Peter W. and Graham, Douglas
F. Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm.
Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1994. 288pp.
(No price given)

The title of this book gives the impression that this is just another book about the coming fall of the House of Saud. That is not totally inaccurate. Throughout this work the authors build up a list of indicators that point in that direction; in the end, however, Wilson and Graham hedge on their analysis. They assert in their conclusion that "since the creation of the Saudi state, obituaries of its imminent demise have been written many times. But in each case, the al-Saud survived and triumphed, a tribute to their political skills and acumen. . . . The al-Saud are by no means condemned to defeat. However, the situation calls for prompt and decisive action." The reader is left to conclude what that might be.

Both Wilson and Graham are journalists who lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. One of the book's greatest

140 Naval War College Review

strengths is its comprehensive coverage of the land and its people; but its real focus is on the internal threat to the House of Saud.

The first chapter describes in detail how the dynasty's founder, King Abdulaziz bin Saud, unified the diverse tribes of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Subsequent chapters deal with Saudi Arabia's political system, foreign relations, military and security forces, economy, and social issues. In each chapter the authors explain how the House of Saud today is attempting to apply the lessons learned from Abdulaziz and his successors.

Wilson and Graham identify numerous potential areas of concern. The information is insightful, perceptive, and replete with insider information. The authors appear to be comfortable dealing with the Saudi economy and providing details of its practice of foreign relations. However, in some cases, their discussion of Saudi military and security forces is dated and incomplete.

The main problem with this work is that documentation is journalistic; at times it reads like a newspaper's investigative exposé. (This may be, in part, because of the number of sensitive sources the authors indicate they are protecting.) Bold words and far-reaching analyses often overstate valid points. One concerns the House of Saud's challenge of "how to maintain its grip on power in the face of the greatest concerned domestic unrest and opposition in more than 60 years." This is a real issue, but it leads one to think that the streets of Riyadh and Jeddah are rife with protesting demonstrators. Another example concerns the Royal Family's

key positions in the kingdom: "Prince Turki bin Abdulaziz . . . holds no government portfolio due to the scandals surrounding his in-laws, the al-Fassi family." The prince has held many key positions in the Kingdom throughout the years. It was his decision to retire from public service so that he could improve his economic situation. A final example is the authors' statement about the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF): "The Royal Saudi Air Force has always been the favored service in the military establishment. . . . The Royal Saudi Air Force has also been the most coup-prone service in the Kingdom." It is true that in recent years the RSAF received a larger share of the defense budget because of large expenditures on air defense systems, but both the Saudi Land Forces and Saudi National Guard enjoy more prestige than the RSAF. There was one RSAF coup attempt, and some RSAF pilots have flown to other countries in protest against Saudi policies, but I am not sure that these instances qualify the service as coup-prone. Such overstatements detract from what the authors are trying to convey.

That aside, this is a good look at Saudi Arabia's history and the Saudi Arabia of the present. In particular, Wilson and Graham do a good job of describing the Saudi-American "special relationship" that has existed for sixty years and is still misunderstood by both sides. Their explanation of the dilemma the al-Saud face while they try to balance the demands of the fundamentalists and the modernists is also insightful.

Those who are interested in the key issues that affect one of our more important allies in the Middle East should read this book.

DONALD H. ESTES
 Captain, U.S. Navy, Ret.
 Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Quandt, William B. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution and the Univ. of California, 1993. 612pp. \$38.95

"Lessons of history are invariably drawn, but involve highly subjective judgments. Still, they serve as powerful guidelines in intrabureaucratic discussion." In these few words, William Quandt reveals his mind-set toward the problems of scholarship and government. He does not develop magic formulae with magnificent inferential leaps, nor does he leave the reader puzzled about what his judgments are on important processes, events, and ideas. Quandt strikes me as a practical scholar of the first order, who has produced a significant contribution to our diplomatic history in the Middle East.

Born the son of a teacher two weeks before Pearl Harbor, Quandt went on to graduate from Stanford University and earned his doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was a staff member in the National Security Council during the October War, worked as a researcher for RAND, was a member of the political science faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, and has been a Fellow at

Brookings in Washington, D.C., for a decade and a half. His published works focus on the Middle East and serve as the foundation for *Peace Process*. One of his principal works, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1977*, is among the most definitive on the period surrounding the October War of 1973.

This book is chronologically arranged and concludes with some general guidelines, including positive recommendations and cautions of pitfalls for policy makers grappling with complex problems for the first time.

Quandt makes it clear that the frequent turnover in Washington practically guarantees that American policy makers are far less experienced and educated on the issues than those in the Middle East. He cautions that it is unlikely that the U.S. will protect its interests in the Middle East very well, because of the president's lack of continuing interest and enthusiasm. The president must understand that it is important to pay close attention to the problems in the region itself, while remembering that no long-term U.S. overseas policy can succeed without domestic support—with the consequence that he must also attend to domestic affairs. Also, he must appreciate that problems of both substance and process are significant. Grand designs of substance have seldom been fulfilled in every respect, and coping with problems of process is important and less likely to generate domestic opposition. But the ideas of substance are also essential. While it is true that various parochial interests and political rivalries can skew American choices in