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POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR IRAN
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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR IRAN AND
SAUDI ARABIA IN THE 1980'S**

Some Iranian Scenarios

by

Robert G. Darius

Some Saudi Scenarios

by

Robert H. Pelletreau

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Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Janet C. Smith.

FOREWORD

↓ This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium, "Iran and Saudi Arabia: Problems and Possibilities for the United States in the Mid Range," sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute in April 1982. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum, which includes two of the papers presented, considers possible scenarios for Iran and Saudi Arabia in this decade. ←

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



RICHARD D. LAWRENCE
Major General, USA
Commandant

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE AUTHORS

DR. ROBERT G. DARIUS joined the Strategic Studies Institute in 1975. He graduated from Glenville State College with a bachelor's degree in history and social sciences, earned a master's degree from the School of International Service, the American University, and a second master's degree and a doctorate in government and politics and international relations from the University of Maryland. Dr. Darius' research abroad includes several trips to the Middle East, including both sides of the Persian Gulf, and one year of field research as a research associate at the Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, Tehran, Iran. His published works include *American Diplomacy: An Options Analysis of the Azerbaijan Crisis, 1945-1946* (1978), *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1974: A Selective Bibliography* (1976); and several articles in English and Farsi for professional journals.

AMBASSADOR ROBERT H. PELLETREAU received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and earned a bachelor of laws degree from Harvard Law School. He is a member of the New York Bar Association. Ambassador Pelletreau joined the US Foreign Service in 1962. His diplomatic career has included service in seven Arab countries, most recently as the US Ambassador to Bahrain. He was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa prior to assuming his current responsibilities as Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, in May 1981.

SOME IRANIAN SCENARIOS

Events in Iran since the outset of the ongoing Iranian Revolution have increased the degree of interest in the West toward Iran and its institutions just as these events have also intensified the level of stereotyping prevalent toward Iran in particular, and Islam in general. Despite the increased interest, Iranian affairs still remain shrouded in mystery for most people in the West.

What is going to happen to Iran after Khomeini? Since its inception, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been influenced heavily by the personal traits, likes, and dislikes of Ayatollah Khomeini. The frail, implacable 81-year old remains the central figure of the Iranian revolution. He is "the sole source of political legitimacy. When he dies, many believe, Iran could fragment into a factional battleground, perhaps a civil war." No doubt that civil war is a real possibility and a worst case scenario. That, as well as a host of other possible alternatives for Iran, will be presented in this paper.

The wealthy, the educated, and most of the Western-oriented, upper middle class have fled Iran; some have joined the opposition, and most have become disenchanted with the clergy-dominated Islamic Republic. The armed forces still remain indecisive and weak. The clergy still commands mass support among the poor.

illiterate, religious masses who form the vast majority of the population. The age-old religious institutions, which the former Shah ignored, permeate all levels of society and provide the mullahs with an excellent, existing political/religious means to remain in power. Mullahcracy, along with upheavals, is probably the most likely scenario in Iran, at least for the foreseeable future.

James A. Bill claims that "the central and pivotal role" of religious leaders in the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 "cannot be overemphasized."² Indeed, it was the Shia religious leaders who "directed and then took control of the revolution."³

From their mosques, schools, cells (hojrehs), and holy shrines, the Shi'a clerics personally and effectively put together an opposition organization that stretched from one end of the country to the other. It was this organization that mobilized the population and that was ultimately responsible for the collapse and destruction of the Pahlavi regime.⁴

Is the demise of mullahcracy in sight, as many Iranians in exile claim? Probably this is nostalgic, wishful thinking. Major revolutions with popular mass participation usually have been followed by prolonged periods of upheaval, as illustrated by the French, Russian, and the ongoing Iranian Revolution. At this stage, one can only conjecture as to the Revolution's ultimate direction.

The major question is how Khomeini's disappearance from politics would affect the shaky internal situation in Iran. As Eric Rouleau correctly points out, "The plethora of forces on the political scene, each one obeying its own internal and evolving dynamics, makes it impossible to hazard any valid prognosis for the medium or long term. The most that can be done is to evaluate the balance of forces such as it exists today and could remain in the near future."⁵

BACKGROUND

Ever since the departure of the Shah in mid-January 1979, and Khomeini's return to Iran on January 31, 1979, he has remained the source of power in Iran. The struggle between Mehdi Bazargan's "moderate" *de jure* government and the *Komitehs* and the extremist mullahs, which together served as the *de facto* government, ended after the seizure of the US Embassy and the detention of US diplomatic personnel as hostages. This bizarre

event, in part, illustrated Khomeini's aspiration that Iran should be free from the "hands of foreigners," and that diplomatic immunity was synonymous with "capitulations" of the pre-1928 era. But, in reality, the hostages were caught in the midst of the internal struggle between the so-called "moderates" and extremist fundamentalists. Toward the end of 1979, economic problems, the dual layer of government, the relatively swift process of drafting the Islamic constitution, and ethnic unrest indicated the tempo of revolutionary upheaval, as well as rising political discontent in Iran.

The *de jure* Bazargan government was only a facade, since real power lay in the hands of the clergy and their *Komitehs*. Yet, the seizure of the US Embassy and the taking of the hostages provided Khomeini an opportunity not only to use anti-American feelings to mobilize the population, but also provided a chance to neutralize the so-called "Westernized liberals" who were allegedly prepared "to compromise with imperialism."⁶ And such was the fate of Bazargan's government.

The ongoing Gulf War also worked to the advantage of the extremist Muslim fundamentalists. It diverted public attention from domestic divisive issues toward national unity against Iraq, as the enemy—illustrating the complex relationship of internal-external events which have affected Iran in recent times. As R. K. Ramazani points out, "The interplay between domestic and foreign policy should be considered in regard to the foreign policy of all countries" In this period of Khomeini's regime, the linkage between domestic and external policies is particularly crucial, as illustrated below:

- The general disparity of wealth, the high level of corruption, brutality, death, midnight door knocks by the secret police, and other characteristics of the former Shah's regime, are far more valid descriptions of Khomeini's regime. Violence, injustice, and suffocation of basic human rights today in Iran are unsurpassed, while a new "dynasty" rising from the bosom of the mullahs is trying to solidify its rule in that country. Is this really new or is it merely a repetition of Iranian history in which dynasties like sandstorms appear and disappear?

- Underlying cleavages between such groups as the urban and rural, wealthy and poor, Shia and Sunni, minorities and majority, left and right, conservative religious clergy and less religious middle

class, and tribal factions remain the principal sources of upheavals in Iran.

- The historic vestiges of Kurdish, Baluch, Azerbaijani, Turkoman, and ethnic Arab grievances have not and will not disappear from Iran's political scene in the 1980's. These traditional divisions can only be swept under by sheer force, if a strong central government could emerge in Tehran that could pacify them. Such a government is not in sight. Therefore, ethnic and tribal unrest will grow as long as the central government remains weak. The distant provinces of Iran lack the national control through the rural police (the gendarmerie) which was effective under the Shah, and Khomeini has so far been unable to reorganize the gendarmerie into an effective force and create a strong central government. The *Pasdaran*, who are young, fervent supporters of Khomeini, have so far failed to reestablish order in Iran.

- Fear, frustration, and uncertainty have led to massive defections with numbers estimated in excess of 200,000 people, and with many others waiting to escape from Iran. The result has been a shortage of professionals to operate and manage the country. Without the return of a fair portion of these professionals, Iran will remain crippled.

- Khomeini's regime led to the decimation and purge of the top military leaders who served the former Shah, and probably could have served Iran under Khomeini. This led to disintegration and demoralization of the higher echelons of the military. However, as a result of the Gulf War, Khomeini began to rejuvenate the armed forces.

- Khomeini's "Islamic" economic system is a shambles. Unemployment, inflation, shortages of goods and services, shortages of housing, collapse of the industrial sector, and drastic cuts in oil production illustrate failure of the economy. It is doubtful if Khomeini could remedy all these problems in the foreseeable future.

- The underground opponents of the Islamic Republic killed about 1,000 leading clergymen in the year following the release of the US hostages. The clergy's grim response was to execute at least 2,150 people in the same period. The swift death sentences were carried out primarily against the Mojahedeen Khalgh and others who allegedly violated Islamic tenets, to include adulterers and drug dealers.⁹

- The execution of members of the Bahai set and Mojahedeen Khalgh continues on various charges such as espionage on behalf of foreign powers. The *Pasdaran* (revolutionary guards) are busy fighting the Iraqis, the Kurdish rebels, various Baluch bands, their own personal enemies, as well as the so-called "pro-American and counterrevolutionary minigroups," as these are discovered by the security forces in Tehran and in other areas in the country. In short, there is no genuine security in Iran today.

- Kurdish rebels, monarchists, army deserters, and some members of the Mojahedeen Khalgh have joined forces in the Kurdish areas against Khomeini.¹⁰ The Kurdish-leftist alliance is another illustration of discontent among ethnic and ideological groups in Iran.

- Terrorists attack mullahs, their representatives, supporters of the previous regime, and ideological or ethnic dissidents. The immediate objective of the opposition is to seek revenge. For example, according to the clandestine Free Voice of Iran Radio, the opposition group which calls itself the Revenge Committee claimed the attack on Mohammad Khamene'i, Majlis Deputy and brother of President Khamene'i, on January 10, 1982.¹¹ The bloody feud will continue, particularly among the large, extended families in Iran through the 1980's. Production and distribution of opium further increase the killings in Iran.

- The "Great Satan" theory helps the clergy escape from "the realities of domestic disunity, of ideological divisions, and of basic structural flaws in the Iranian society . . ."¹² The exploitation and creation of anti-American sentiment, and the view that there is an invisible hand behind the scene which fuels unrest in Iran and encourages Iraq to continue to fight against Iran is a negative theme with clear limits as to its utility. Eventually, the leaders of the Islamic Republic must face reality and try to solve Iran's internal problems, instead of blaming primarily America but also, to some extent, Russia as being the "Great Satan." Defiance of the West has been a principal source of support for Khomeini, as it was for Nasser in Egypt, and as it is for Qaddhafi in Libya. While such a negative rhetoric fails to solve the internal problems of Iran, it helps reinforce support for Khomeini.

- President Seyyed Ali Khamene'i stresses Iran's refusal to approach the United States to obtain advanced technology. Apparently, the United States is still considered "an oppressor,

hegemonist, and imperialist power,"¹³ while these adjectives are not used to describe the Soviet Union.

- Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati stated in mid-January 1982 that Iran will refuse to normalize relations with the United States because, in his view, of US support for Kurdish rebels, Marxists, and other leftist elements which oppose Khomeini. He added, however, that Iran wishes to improve its ties with the USSR, the Gulf States, and West European countries.¹⁴ Apparently, the Soviet Union already provides sizable aid to the Tudeh (Communist) Party, while Iran "staggers on like a Rasputin, for how long no one can foresee"¹⁵

- Khomeini has been a proponent of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front of Libya, Syria, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In addition, he will support Shia movements throughout the world, as illustrated by the support extended to the Lebanese Shia Ama'l movement.

- In early January 1982, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein asserted that he does not consider Iran a "permanent enemy," and that Iraq moved into Iran only to protect Iraqi towns.¹⁶ However, Hussein continued his demand that Iran recognize Iraq's control over "waters and territories, follow a policy of neighborliness, give up its aggression and expansionism, refrain from interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and return all territory 'usurped from the homeland.'"¹⁷ Olof Palme, the UN Special Envoy, said in early March 1982 that he had failed for the fifth time to convince Iran and Iraq to end the 17-month old Gulf War. Palme said he had "exhausted all possibilities to mediate in the war between Iran and Iraq."¹⁸ According to *Ar-Ra'y Al-Amm*, the Kuwaiti newspaper, Iran may agree to the disengagement of forces in the Gulf War provided that contingents of Algerian, Syrian, and other Arab and Muslim forces could be deployed in the war zone before negotiations take place, on the basis of the 1975 Algiers Agreement.¹⁹

- Despite the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran is an avowed enemy of Israel, has no diplomatic relations with it, supports the PLO, and publicly vows to "liberate" Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina, Iran's leaders reportedly have been purchasing Israeli arms since as early as August 1980.

FUTURE SCENARIOS

General. During 1971-78, many people of Iran sought nostalgic refuge in religion and looked at the ulemas for direction to oppose the former Shah. Today, informed Iranians appear, at best, doubtful if not resentful of what has happened and fearful of what lies ahead for their country.

The Islamic Republic's key leaders, to include Mahmoud Taleghani, Hossein Ali Montazeri, Ali Akbar Hashem-e Rafsanjani, Mohammad Javad Hojati-Kermani, and Ali Hossein Khamene'i, spent time in prison during the Shah's reign. Arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment of the opposition were common practices. After Khomeini took power, these same people sought revenge against Iran's former leaders. Now others seek revenge against the excesses of mullahcracy. Iranians are fond of saying *Akhareh shahnameh khosh ast* or the end of the *shahnameh* remains to be seen. What will be the outcome of the present drama in Iran?

Looking at it from outside, the reign of the mullahs so far has been a period of upheaval, chaos, war, disillusionment, isolation, anger, bitterness, and betrayal. The mullahs seem paranoid about the likelihood of a counterrevolution in which thousands of mullahs could be shot or hanged from the trees in the former Pahlavi Avenue, Tehran. The bitter expression that each tree in Pahlavi Avenue bears the name of a mullah must be known to those in power, and should further increase their paranoia.

The US Government would like to see Iran move in a pro-Western direction; the Soviet Union prefers that Iran move toward a Soviet or a radical, leftist position. Each of the superpowers could seek to use whatever influence and capability it has to move Iran in its own direction. The Soviets manipulate the internal political situation inside Iran in their favor, while the United States seems caught in other crises, uncertain of its interests, or unwilling to counter Soviet manipulations. Iran, however, may choose to pursue a "nonaligned," but not middle of the road approach, with ideological or political leanings toward revolutionary forces, as is the case now. Alternatively, it is conceivable that chaos and uncertainty could lead to fragmentation, civil war, or military rule.

The extremist interpretation of Shia orthodoxy which prevails as the central ideology in Iran today appears to be too inflexible to

meet the needs of a nation which will again aspire to modernize and develop. If disillusionment grows among the urban population, extremist Islamic leaders may allow moderate, pragmatic clerics and technocrats to surface to the top, or face the possible consequences of rising Marxist influence or a military takeover with uncertainties as to its ideological makeup or future direction.

The persistent influence of moderate nationalists in governmental institutions, economic and educational centers, and in the private sectors indicates that this category stands a fair chance of gaining influence, if supported by the clergy and by the armed forces. However, as long as the Tudeh Party, Mojahedeen Khalgh, and various ethnic groups feel that they are outside the mainstream, Iran will remain in a state of upheaval. Ultimately, the reconciliation between the radical leftists and ethnic groups with moderate nationalists and the clergy, while extremely difficult, is necessary.

Another likely alternative is for a relatively unknown, patriotic military officer, who could possibly gain recognition in the Gulf War, to rise to power from behind the scene and recreate an Islamic dictatorship, which would try to "unite" the uncompromising ethnic, ideological, and clerical groups by force. Iran's history is replete with examples of despotism. Therefore, this alternative cannot be ignored as a possibility in the distant future. The remarkable performance of military forces and the revolutionary guards in fighting Iraqi forces in Khuzistan, if continued, could create a new force in internal Iranian politics, which could lead to a future military dictatorship.

Revolutionary Islamic Republic: The Most Likely Case. The clergy plays a considerable role in Iran. He draws "his livelihood from contributions of the faithful, with whom he shares prosperity or poverty, joys, and sorrows. In the mosque or at the traditional gatherings he attends in private homes, virtually any issue of concern to the community is discussed"20 The clergy in Iran can be "a friend, confidant, advisor, or guide for his flock, and acts as a moral support in times of adversity."²¹ The clergy's ability to control the masses through the pulpits in the mosques will remain his principal source of legitimacy and popular support, particularly as long as the majority of the *bazaaris* do not openly oppose them.

Ali Hossein Khamene'i, who became the President of Iran in

October 1981, studied religion in Mashhad and Qom. He became one of Ayatollah Khomeini's key disciples, having studied under him. Khamene'i also held several prominent positions in the Islamic Republic prior to his elevation to the presidency.²² He is a true believer and follower of Khomeini and the first cleric in Iran's history to become its president.

Iran's internal development could remain largely based on the Shia egalitarian commitment toward improving the lot of the masses at the expense of the wealthy upper class. In the course of time, the wealthy upper class of the *ancien regime* will disappear, and be replaced by a new wealthy upper class, predominantly from the clergy, who should have a greater personal commitment toward helping the poor. For the foreseeable future, the government will remain under the control of the extremist clergy, thus the revolutionary Islamic Republic accompanied with endemic upheaval seems to be the most likely case.

Moderate Islamic or Parliamentary Islamic Republics: Best Case Scenarios. Ayatollah Khomeini is seen by his followers as a charismatic, venerable *Imam*, and as a man of courage, conviction, and wisdom. Those who oppose the Ayatollah see him as a narrow-minded, simplistic, miserable, wretched human being who seeks revenge, power, and glory for himself and for the hard-line clergy.

Ali Hossein Khamene'i, Ali Akbar Hashem-Rafsanjani, and Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani also are seen by many critics as leaders who have a narrow-minded view of the world. The Islamic Republic has a strong flavor of revolutionary leadership which actively participates in the political process. On the other hand, pragmatic clerical leaders such as Kazem Shariatmadari, Mohammad Reza Golpayagani, and Hassan Tabatabai-Ghomi, who are less ideological, prefer to stay out of the realm of politics. The pragmatists are outnumbered in terms of influence in the *Komitehs*, in the Majlis, and among the ruling clergy. As a result, they maintain a low profile, at least for the present time. Discontent among extremist and moderate senior religious leaders and the likelihood of friction and possible division among them over the direction of the present regime can be a serious threat to the moral absolutism of the extremists in Iran. Several of the grand ayatollahs, who are known as the "source of inspiration," have "grave reservation"²³ about the direction of the revolution, but are for now reluctant to speak out against Ayatollah Khomeini.

Hopefully, as James A. Bill points out, after Ayatollah Khomeini "passes from the scene, and as the period of extremism slowly passes into Brinton's period of Thermidor and ultimately to the construction of a new system, the influence and power of the extremist wing of the Shi'a clerics will almost certainly evaporate."²⁴ The logical, rational, next step would be a Shia state in which the religious clerics act as the guardians of the state, and in which the moderate religious clergy will serve in a national reconciliation and encourage the return of a professional middle class to a safe and relatively stable Iran.

Ayatollah Shariatmadari is the type of leader who could bring about a reconciliation between the moderate and hard-line religious elements, if he survives the intense power rivalry which is expected to follow after Khomeini departs. Yet the manipulative, byzantine ability necessary to survive such a potential blood rivalry makes Shariatmadari less than likely to reach the pinnacle of power.

If the Islamic Republic were to find a way to bring about reconciliation between the moderate and hard-line clergy, and could encourage the ethnic groups, the middle class and the armed forces to willingly participate in such a reconciliation, the future of the Islamic Republic would look bright. But such a development appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.

If the moderate clergy gains the upper hand, the *bazaaris*, the middle class and the armed forces together could form a positive, constructive alliance to create a genuine parliamentary Islamic Republic in which the Majlis would play a vital role in maintaining a limit on the abuse of power by the executive branch. Under such a scenario, there is hope for evolution of a genuinely Islamic democratic government in Iran in the long term, which would be the best scenario. In the short term, however, the likelihood of such a development appears dim.

Disintegration, Civil War, and a Pro-Soviet State: Worst Case Scenario. The disintegration of Iran into several ministates formed by the Azerbaijanis, the Baluchs, the Turkomans, and the Kurds is a conceivable worst case scenario, particularly if Iran goes through a civil war in this process. In this scenario, the Azerbaijanis, for example, could ask for Soviet support, and "volunteers" from Azerbaijan, S.S.R., probably would be sent to assist their "brethren" in Iran.

The disintegration scenario would be tantamount to indirect

Soviet control of, at least, parts of Iran bringing the USSR yet closer to the Gulf and the Arabian Sea. If access to the warm water ports remains a Soviet objective, it could be achieved through a disintegrated Iran in the 1980's. As William B. Quandt points out:

Many in the Middle East expect that Iran will eventually slip into the Soviet sphere of influence. This could occur if a pro-Soviet regime were to come to power. Or it could result from Iran's fragmentation, with 'autonomous' governments in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan turning to Moscow for support as happened after World War II.²⁷

Iran as Another "Cuba." Menaced by grave economic problems at home, a growing isolation abroad, and a war with Iraq, the Khomeini regime has established closer economic ties with the Soviet Union. According to *An-Nahar Arab Report* and *MEMO*, "Iran has been increasingly turning to the Soviet Union for the means to effect an economic recovery, and Moscow has responded."²⁶ Recently, *Izvestia*, after months of silence, revealed "a discreet sympathy for Imam Khomeini's regime."²⁷ Iran and the USSR have signed numerous land and sea transit agreements to allow Iran to use USSR, instead of the war endangered Gulf ports, for trade and commerce.

In the short term, Soviet support could be used to partially revive Iran's ailing economy and allegedly to protect the fragile rule of Khomeini against perceived external foes, Arabs led by Iraq or supported by the United States. In the long term, Soviet support could be followed by increased covert political activities, increased likelihood of Communist subversion, and greater likelihood of Iran slowly slipping into the Soviet orbit.

An Iraqi victory in the Gulf War could also increase Soviet-Iranian ties from economic collaboration to the realm of political and military. Iran carefully watches the actions of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab support of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, and the protection which the AWACS provides to Saudi Arabia, particularly since Iran appears to be singled out as the key, immediate danger to Gulf security. These moves, if coupled with a decisive Iraqi victory, could indeed result in increased military cooperation between Moscow and Tehran. Such an event could signal the beginning of an extremely dangerous situation for the West in the entire Gulf area, such as the

creation of a "Cuban-style" Iran, under the control or sponsorship of the USSR, which would probably be the worst case scenario.

Military Rule: A Likely Scenario. The Gulf War has so far amounted to a stalemate, with no clear winner in sight. If the war ends with some clear battle victories for Iran's armed forces, it is conceivable that a junior officer could rise from the war to a position of national prominence, and through a *coup d'etat* establish a military dictatorship. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain the ideological stance of such a regime since it could be leftist and radical, Islamic rightist, or conceivably moderate and pro-Western. If Iran wins, fundamentalist uprisings could increase in Iraq. If Iraq endures, Iran could be forced into the Soviet arms. Either way, the effects of the Gulf War could be negative for Washington. A peaceful resolution of the Gulf War, with no definite winners, may be the best solution for all parties concerned.

Monarchy/Military Rule: A Conceivable Scenario. Iranians in exile may be under an illusion as to the demise of the extremist Islamic Republic of Iran. Such feelings by Iranians in exile also are nostalgic, when comparing the revolutionary upheavals in Iran to the prosperity and the imposed calm which existed there under the former Shah. The return of a limited monarchy is conceivable, provided there is sufficient public support for it, but at this stage it remains an aspiration for supporters of the monarchy as an institution and particularly those of the *ancien regime*.

Many Western-educated Iranians, particularly those in exile, view the extremist mullahs as venal characters who are ignorant, corrupt, and narrow-minded leeches on society. The term *akhondha va akhondbazi* is used by them in derogatory contexts to refer to the mullahs and to their rule. With such a stereotyped view, it is difficult for Iran's Western-oriented exiled elite to have much hope of returning to Iran as long as it is governed by extremist mullahs. Mullahs, in fact, can also be learned, knowledgeable, as well as simple-minded, particularly in their view of international politics, diplomacy, and Tehran's position between Moscow and Washington. Unity remains an elusive objective for the fractious promonarchical Iranian opposition which has already made several inauspicious attempts. The opposition, in a broader sense, most likely will remain fractionalized in the near future, unless the internal environment in Iran drastically changes in their favor.

In closing, as Eric Rouleau points out, "the prospects with or

without Khomeini seem bleak indeed”²⁸ At this stage, probably the wisest course for the United States is to watch the situation carefully; balance covert and overt Soviet activities as they develop; encourage expanded relations between Western Europe, Japan, the moderate Islamic states and Iran to reduce its isolation; and remain prepared to welcome Iran into the world community, if such a development were to occur.

ENDNOTES

1. John Kifner, "Iran Pursues Grim Repression to Meet Guerrillas Challenge," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1982, p. 1.
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3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Eric Rouleau, "Khomeini's Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1980, Vol. 59, No. 1, p. 19.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
7. R. K. Ramazani, "Who Lost America? The Case of Iran," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Winter 1982, p. 7.
8. Kifner, "Iran Pursues Grim Repression to Meet Guerrillas Challenge," p. 1.
9. FBIS-MEA-82-004, January 7, 1982, Vol. V, No. 004, p. i.
10. FBIS-MEA-82-005, January 8, 1982, Vol. V, No. 005, p. ii.
11. FBIS-MEA-82-006, January 11, 1982, Vol. V, No. 006, p. i.
12. Ramazani, "Who Lost America? The Case of Iran," p. 21.
13. FBIS-MEA-82-005, January 8, 1982, Vol. V, No. 005, p. ii.
14. FBIS-MEA-82-008, January 13, 1982, Vol. V, No. 008, p. ii.
15. Barry Rubin, "US Aid for Pakistan," *The New York Times*, February 19, 1982, p. A31.
16. FBIS-MEA-82-004, January 7, 1982, Vol. V, No. 004, p. i.
17. *Ibid.*
18. "Palme Says Talks Fail to End Iran-Iraq War," *The New York Times*, March 2, 1982, p. A4.
19. FBIS-MEA-82-006, January 11, 1982, Vol. V, No. 006, p. ii.
20. Rouleau, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 5.
21. *Ibid.*
22. He was the head of the *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards), *Imam Jom'eh Tehran*, and the head of the Islamic Republic Party, to mention a few of his key posts.
23. Kifner, "Iran Pursues Grim Repression to Meet Guerrillas Challenge," p. A11.
24. Bill, "Power and Religion in Revolutionary Iran."
25. William B. Quandt, "The Middle East Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 1980, p. 558.
26. "Iran: Tehran Seeks Economic Cooperation With Moscow," *An-Nahar Arab Report*, Vol. 6, No. 8, February 22, 1982, p. 4.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Rouleau, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 20.

SOME SAUDI SCENARIOS

This year the Saudis will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the unification of the Kingdoms of Nejd and Hejaz under one of the century's extraordinary leaders, King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud. The resultant Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became the 12th largest nation of the world, with an area the size of the United States east of the Mississippi, but a population that even today is less than that of New York City.

In terms of present and long-term wealth and influence, Saudi Arabia possesses 25 percent of the world's known petroleum reserves, has well over \$100 billion in reserves and for the first time earned more than that figure in 1981 alone from its petroleum exports. It is probably the largest single foreign holder of US national debt. While the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency has to date followed conservative and responsible investment policies, and taken care that its investments in foreign currencies, debt instruments, shares of companies and real estate do not have disruptive effects either financially or politically, the Saudis have the theoretical capability to cause financial chaos, dislocate almost any world currency, and undermine the soundness of the international banking system.

The Saudis are also giving away some \$5-7 billion annually in assistance to multilateral organizations, other governments or groups that they desire to strengthen or accommodate as part of their own national security policy. In geopolitical terms, the Saudis clearly have a predominant role on the Arabian Peninsula and an influential one in Iraq and Iran, the Horn of Africa, North Africa, and the Levant. These are basically the stakes involved for those dealing with Saudi Arabia in the 1980's, whether they are looking at the Kingdom from the outside or from within, from the eyes of Saudi Arabia's ruling royal family or its citizens.

The decade of the 1970's was one of unparalleled growth, development, and modernization for the Kingdom. According to a popular description, the national bird of Saudi Arabia became the building crane as the government undertook massive infrastructure development in virtually all sectors of the economy and all parts of the country, even its most remote and climatically inhospitable corners. Thousands of Saudis returned with doctorates from US and European schools and were absorbed in this effort, either as officials of the central government, local administrators, project managers, or private businessmen. The Saudi armed forces shared fully in this decade of development, growing not so much in total numbers (except for the air force) as in terms of military infrastructure, professional training and modern weaponry. Defense expenditures leaped from about \$1.5 billion in 1970 to over \$15 billion at the end of the decade, a tenfold increase.

This accelerated economic development clearly outstripped the more modest pace of social development and the more modest pace still of political development. This imbalance has inevitably created strains and tensions within Saudi Arabia. External developments, too, have subjected Saudi policymakers to new influences and pressures. Four of these which had a major impact on Saudi perceptions during the 1970's were the dramatic growth in Soviet military capabilities; the world addiction to oil; the Islamic revolution in Iran; and the continued, gnawing existence of the Palestinian problem.

The House of Saud, most observers agree, managed to steer Saudi Arabia through this stormy decade remarkably well. Last year, during the course of the AWACS debate, opponents of the sale both on the Hill and among the interested public subjected Saudi Arabia's leaders and its governing institutions to probing,

skeptical examination. How stable was Saudi Arabia? How good or bad were the prospects for continuing royal rule in the 1980's and 1990's? Were there forces of alienation developing which American decisionmakers were unwilling or unable to see, that risked Saudi Arabia becoming another Iran? For the most part, analysts concluded that the patient was in pretty good shape.¹ We are admonished in William Quandt's book, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980's*, to "resist the temptation to try to predict how long the Saudi regime will remain in power."² It is, perhaps regrettably, not feasible to follow that good advice. Saudi Arabia is too important to Western and regional interests to permit such a benign approach—and besides, influential critics continue to ask the basic questions.

Let us look briefly then, at the major factors of stability and potential instability in the Kingdom. The first focal point must be the Royal Family itself and whether its rule and system of governing will continue to meet the aspirations of Saudi citizens in the years ahead. The legitimacy of the House of Saud is well founded in Saudi Arabia's historical experience. In the first third of this century, the al-Saud and their allies conquered and unified the tribes of Saudi Arabia into a single kingdom. Under the spiritual guidance of the Ulema, who in turn gave them temporal allegiance, they became the protectors of the holiest places of Islam, Mecca, and Medina, and have since acted consistently as protectors of the faith and preservers of traditional values in the society while at the same time functioning as agents of modernization and change. Unlike the Pahlavi House, which in total size numbered no more than 100 individuals, there are more than 2,000 male princes of the al-Saud. They are present as active working officers of the armed forces and national guard, in all key government offices including particularly the provincial governorships, and many are in business throughout the Kingdom. They normally are quite well educated and intermarry with the nation's tribal and technical elites to form a rather widespread web of family alliance and influence.

The problem of succession has been clearly faced and this also lends stability to the regime. In such a vital matter, the family has been able to keep its internal rivalries out of public view and to present a united front to the outside world. Thus, we witnessed a smooth and orderly transition when Faisal was assassinated in 1975 and Khalid became King, with Fahd as Crown Prince. Abdallah is

known to be next in line after Fahd. Contrast this preparation and forethought with the so-called progressive regimes in Syria or Iraq! There, no one inside or out can predict with any authority who will succeed Hafez al-Assad or Saddam Hussein, nor do institutionalized mechanisms exist for their selection.

The Royal Family also works hard at the fundamental prerequisite for political durability, constituency tending. The King personally travels to various parts of the Kingdom during the year to hold majlis with tribal and local leaders. The then Crown Prince Fahd spent a number of days in the Eastern Province, following the December coup attempt in Bahrain, meeting with Shia community leaders and hearing and responding to their grievances. In addition, most senior princes of the Family sit in open majlis, some on a weekly basis, receiving personal appeals or petitions from citizens or their intermediaries.

Decisionmaking in Saudi Arabia is generally a collegial process. This can be highly frustrating to a foreign government or company in quest of a quick response to a given demarche or contract proposal, but it assures that a variety of views are taken into account and that the decision when taken represents a consensus. A cogent case can therefore be made for the conclusion that the Saudi monarchy, as it exists today, represents a natural and widely accepted evolution from Saudi Arabia's own tribal past, and that its leaders rule with a broad degree of popular consent.

Well, a critic may ask, what about dissident groups—on the right as well as the left? And what about the Shia? A Saudi Communist Party exists in exile but its membership is exceedingly small. A Nasserist dissident movement that bloomed in the 1960's seems to be withering away, much like some of our own sixties' movements. Moreover, the leftist ideologies do not appear to hold much appeal for Saudi students, whether at home or studying in foreign universities. The attraction of ultrareligious patterns of thought and behavior seems somewhat greater. The Saudi desert has periodically produced fundamentalist religious preachers; in fact, the strict Saudi Wahhabite tradition itself stems from one of them, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. The fact that many Saudis are inclined to see in the strict observance of Islam the antidote to too rapid modernization or Westernization adds to this attraction.

Some raise the question whether the Mecca Mosque seizure in November 1979 could be repeated with more widespread success in

the future. Actually, a crucial element of this bizarre incident that is frequently overlooked is the fact that it did not cause uprisings elsewhere in the country, as its instigators had hoped and counted on. In another sense, too, the mosque incident may have been a blessing in disguise in that it impelled significant improvements in the Saudi internal security apparatus both on the intelligence-gathering side and in its reactive capabilities.

The Shia represent some 300,000 inhabitants of the Eastern Province, centered in the Qatif and al-Hasa oases and the worker communities around Dhahran. They showed some agitation during and after the annual Ashura celebrations in 1979, spurred by the Islamic revolution in Iran and a barrage of radio propaganda out of Tehran, but the limited violence was quickly brought under control by the National Guard, and the subsequent inflow of funds and improved social services seems to have taken the edge off discontent. Some 13 Saudi Shia were apprehended in the Bahrain coup attempt last December and turned over to Saudi custody.

Saudi Arabia currently hosts over two million foreign workers, two communities of whom are thought by some to pose potential threats—the Palestinians and the North Yemenis. The Yemenis number some 8-900 thousand and the Palestinians 100 thousand or less. Most of the Palestinians are employed in professional or merchant middle class activities, have their families with them, and thus have a stake in remaining in the Kingdom. The Yemenis are similarly mortgaged in that they have no comparable employment opportunities elsewhere. With Saudi remittances constituting its most important source of foreign exchange, the government in Sanaa, even if it were to become more leftist in orientation, is unlikely to want to close off this source of revenue by fomenting agitation. Moreover, there has recently been a downward trend in the number of Yemenis in Saudi Arabia in favor of Pakistanis, Filipinos, Sri Lankans and others, and the government could easily accelerate this trend if it desired. This does not mean that there will not be a few troublemakers from South Yemen who are able to swim in the sea of the Yemeni worker community, but the group as a whole is likely to remain docile in order to protect its access and share of the foreign labor market.

The most obvious and traditional place to look for challenges to existing regimes in the Third World has been the army. Could there be, in the ranks of Saudi Arabia's armed forces, a Qaddhafi or

Reza Shah, an Anwar Sadat or even a Sergeant Doe who might—if the opportunity presented itself, or acting spontaneously from boiled-over frustration—attempt to seize power? Or could one identify an as yet uncoalesced group of officer princes who might, if they violently disagreed with courses decided by the senior princes, come together and move to replace them by military force? Early ambivalence on the part of Saudi rulers toward development of an effective army gave way, in the 1970's, to a solid commitment to building a modern force capable of protecting the nation's vulnerable borders and oil facilities. The formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council a year ago and its growing security focus over the past few months have given the continued development and modernization of Saudi armed forces a regional as well as national mandate. Despite the predictions of detractors, professional Saudi military capabilities seem bound to improve substantially in the 1980's. Pay and other incentives will remain attractive enough to recruit and train skilled Saudis for visible and prestigious military roles, while clerical and support positions will continue to be filled largely by contract. The Saudi armed services will also face the continuing challenges of absorbing and learning to use the high technology equipment that is necessary to compensate for their manpower constraints, as well as developing credible deterrents to potential threats from Iran and South Yemen, and building within the GCC context a rapid reaction force and other elements of collective security. These benefits and tasks should be enough to keep the Saudi armed forces out of politics, as they have been up to this time.

The next 10 years also will see continuous development of the National Guard, primarily as an instrument to deliver services and share the wealth of the nation with the rural tribal areas, but also as a counterforce to the army should the loyalty of any of its units come into doubt. This does not appear a likely possibility; signs of latent or potential disaffection are not apparent, but a note of caution seems prudent. Despite our long training and support association with the Royal Saudi Air Force, the Royal Saudi Navy, the National Guard, and some elements of the Land Forces, it has not been possible to acquire the sort of sensitive attitudinal data needed for a reasonably confident assessment.

Where does this leave us in terms of best case, worst case, and most likely scenarios? First, it seems reasonable to conclude that

the House of Saud will persevere in governing Saudi Arabia. Worst case scenarios which would replace the entire 6,000 strong clan and its central role do not hold up to careful scrutiny. One could, however, postulate alternatives to the most likely and currently-prepared scenario which is an orderly succession of monarchs and members of the Royal Council chosen from among the sons and grandsons of Abdul Aziz. It is conceivable that a split view on succession could arise within the family, but only if the senior princes somehow discredited themselves and the army then gave its backing to a prince of the next generation or one who had not been tainted.

How might such a discrediting take place? Suppose, for example, the United States were to decide that US national interests required Saudi Arabia to join the Camp David process or even to sign a peace agreement with Israel and that an ultimatum was warranted. Or suppose that the United States pressed to impose US military bases and the stationing of US military forces on Saudi territory for the purpose of restoring the strategic balance in Southwest Asia and deterring further Soviet encroachment southward toward the Indian Ocean littoral. And suppose that the senior princes, in a moment of weakness, foregoing their normal consensus-seeking processes and ignoring their popular and elite group opinion, succumbed to one of these demands. This could cause the senior princes to become discredited in the eyes of the rest of the family as well as their broader constituencies, and give birth to pressures to remove them. In fact, however, the senior princes have demonstrated on repeated occasions that they well realize the risks of taking actions which go against the grain of Saudi opinion and have avoided such actions, even when to do so has strained their relations with the United States or another outside power.

The more likely scenarios for Saudi Arabia in the 1980's are those which involve a change in policy rather than a change in leadership. If, for example, it became too difficult, too unpopular, or too uncertain a proposition to maintain its close security relationship with the United States, Saudi Arabia could seek to ensure its security by placing itself solidly within the prevailing Arab mainstream on Arab, Islamic, and nonaligned political issues. It could simultaneously distance itself further from the United States by turning increasingly to European suppliers for military equipment and training. Some moves in these directions

have already occurred, such as Saudi adhesion to the Baghdad Summit resolutions in 1979 and the shift from the United States to France as primary supplier and advisor to the Royal Saudi Navy in the second half of this decade. Further such actions are likely regardless of US policy. But the pace and extent of this evolution will be affected by US policies and actions.

If the Congress, for example, were to refuse to approve a Saudi request for some modern weapon system or technology which the senior princes and their senior military advisors deemed necessary and legitimate to enhance Saudi defensive capabilities—and this would require only a three vote shift in the Senate from the 52-48 vote in favor of the AWACS last October—the trend toward reliance on other suppliers would accelerate. Congressional approval of such sales, but with conditions that the Saudis perceived as degrading or incompatible with their sovereignty, would produce the same result.

In similar fashion, a less balanced US position on Arab-Israeli issues could push Saudi leaders more rapidly into the shelter of the nonaligned mainstream. An unprovoked or ambiguously provoked Israeli military action into Lebanon could create such a challenge for the United States. Our unwillingness or inability to secure rapid Israeli withdrawal in such a hypothetical case would ensure a Saudi shift away from us. A similar shift might result from the collapse of US-Israeli-Egyptian autonomy talks if it were not immediately followed by a serious effort by the United States to develop another approach. Absent such obvious shortsightedness on our part, however, the most likely scenarios in Saudi Arabia appear to be ones which will preserve a broad measure of common interest and cooperation between our two nations.

ENDNOTES

1. For those who wish to read further into the subject, there was a study published last August by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives entitled *Saudi Arabia and the United States, the New Context in an Evolving "Special Relationship,"* and also Shaw and Long's *Saudi Arabian Mobilization, the Impact of Change on Stability*, published by the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies earlier this year, but circulated in draft form during the AWACS Congressional presentation last fall.

2. William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980's: Foreign Policy, Security and Oil*, Washington: Brookings Institution, 1981, p. 105.

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