Civil-Military Relations in the Arab Monarchies:
The Blurred Lines Between King and Commander in Jordan and Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

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This paper offers an analysis of the Saudi and Hashemite dynasties and their relationships to the armed camps in their kingdoms. It centers on the question of military intervention in domestic politics and under what structural conditions it has been effectively curtailed. Certain domestic crises are examined to make explicable the longevity of these regimes in a climate of praetorian domestic politics. These monarchies are found to embrace political arrangements which are well suited to civilian control over the military establishment. These arrangements are owed to deliberate regime practices in the employ of coup-proofing measures, conditions particular to the countries’ themselves, and the structural realities of ruling monarchy. The role of monarchy as an alternative organizing principle to nationalism is examined in the context of military intervention and found to have explanatory purchase in examining the role of tribal military structures in the development of modern bureaucratic states.
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Chapter I

Introduction

In the climate of praetorianism and revolution that has prevailed in the Middle East, how is it that certain regimes, in particular the monarchies, have managed to avoid such politics? Understanding the role of the military in Arab politics requires a historical perspective, at once to clarify the nature of the military’s relationship to the regime and to the nation, and further to understand its organizational composition. As the colonial order of the Middle East unraveled in the wake of the second world war, the Arab militaries began to forcefully assert themselves in domestic politics. The rationale behind such assertion varied from country to country, however, the common thread of military intervention was that the civilian leadership, as it was then constituted, was unprepared to cope with the challenges of statehood. Following the 1948 Arab Israeli War (and indeed before such time in Iraq) the coup d’état, and threat thereof, characterized the dynamics of the civilian government and their military. Syria itself saw no less than three coups in 1949 alone, however the most consequential coup in the region must be said to be the 1952 Free Officers revolt. The Free Officers were a movement of junior officers in the Egyptian army who, in the midst of civil unrest and anti-British sentiment struck out at King Farouk and deposed him in 1952. Couching their intervention in nationalist terms and playing off of the anti-colonial fervor of the post-war years, this coup-turned-revolution abolished the monarchy in 1953 and exported a model of praetorianism which was to be emulated across the Arab world. Further, Egypt was set up as an example of pan-Arabism which upended the political order of the Middle East. In 1958 an Iraqi Free Officers movement brought down the
Hashemite monarchy in Iraq (a similar such movement was foiled in their attempts to overthrow the Jordanian Hashemites). North Yemen and Libya were also party to the regicidal wave of the Arab Cold War.

The military, especially in Egypt, was to serve as the liberator of the nation from the yoke of a colonial legacy and, though that government under Nasser which succeeded the monarchy was civilian in manner, the military itself was to retain this national character. Until defeat in the 1967 War, the civil and military leadership ruled jointly, before giving way to a more explicit civilian control. As we shall see, however, this civilian control was possible in part through the alignment of civil-military interests in domestic and foreign politics. Elsewhere in the Arab world, the militarization of politics did not render the same, more or less stable outcomes as the Egyptian case. Syria would not effectively neutralize the military until 1971 under the presidency of Hafez al-Assad. Iraq too was subject to the wages of coup and counter-coup politics until the Ba’athists (and Saddam Hussein) managed to coup themselves back not power in 1969. All told by 1970 four monarchies had fallen to politicized militaries, and until that decade the coup would enjoy great currency as the leading mechanism for correcting the political course of the nation. The remaining monarchies of the Middle East have never, in their modern history, seen a successful coup nor military driven revolution. Indeed, they are conspicuous for the absence of the military from overt participation in politics.

It has been well observed that civil-military relations are founded upon a paradox, namely, that while the civilian government is nominally in charge of the military, it is the military which exercises raw power capable of undoing civilian authority. They share, however, the responsibility of national defense.¹ The ideal scenario for this relationship, from a civilian

(and defense) perspective, is one in which the military understands itself to be an instrument of the civilian government, but one whose material needs are met while enjoying operational autonomy in the conduct of its principle charge, war and defense. If the military has not adopted an attitude of subservience to civilian authority, the implication is that the civilian government has in some way failed to legitimize itself before the military. The civilian government, to avoid the military acting on such conceptions will either take steps to legitimize itself or neutralize the capability of the military to intervene.

At the center of this study is the idea of legitimacy, how it is constructed and before whom it is expected. An assumption from which we begin, and from which it is indeed difficult to divert, is that, as Mao once remarked, political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. A state is constituted, organized and ultimately defended by a coercive leverage which, theoretically, belongs only to the state. Legitimacy is the degree to which that leverage need not be explicit. That coercive leverage, in reality, belongs to the ones who physically wield it, and the capability exists to turn it inward. The soldiery has in them the physical power to determine, at least negatively, how a state is constituted. Legitimacy, in this regard, is the degree to which such an intervention is unacceptable to themselves. Our concern here is the case of monarchy and its relationship to the soldiery. The Arab Middle East provides some of the last remaining examples of ruling monarchy. Unlike fellow Arab countries in the region, these monarchies have, as a sheer fact of history, enjoyed the support of at least some part of the military. When we talk of civil-military relations in the monarchies, the “civil” in that dichotomy is the institution of monarchy itself; the ruling dynasty. Every bloodless succession in a monarchy is a testament to the degree to which military society is comfortable with the ruling family, regardless of who personally sits on the throne.
The prevailing understanding of authoritarian states is that they fall back upon coercion with greater frequency than those which are buoyed by a sense of common participation in government. Surely a regime which does so, at the least, has not the confidence in its own legitimacy before its people (or its subjects) as the other. While this may be so, it is ultimately not the people before whom government needs legitimacy, but rather the armed segments of society. To them alone falls the capability to undo the state. The power of the modern state is such that no purely popular revolution can topple the state without the allegiance of at least part of the military establishment. Given the history of the post-Ottoman Arab states, it is peculiar indeed to encounter countries whose history is unblemished by the politics of praetorianism. The monarchies enjoy such a record. When examining the longevity of the surviving monarchies we must be concerned with explaining the absence of two phenomenon in the military; revolution and opportunism. I offer that the efforts of tribal monarchies ultimately placed little emphasis on nation building. The politics of newly-consolidated, tribal societies where ill-disposed to the politics of popular sovereignty which fly with nationalism. This lack of emphasis, coupled with the constitution of armed forces drawn from tribal levies, lent itself to military establishments which were comfortable with allowing the politics of monarchy to decide itself. Understood as pillars of the state, the tribal forces of the monarchies are also reflective of the character of monarchical politics itself, whose emphasis is on kinship and whose avenues of political participation proceed along such lines. As such these tribal monarchies are particularly well equipped to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of the armed forces. The predictability of succession and the symbiosis of monarchy and tribal levies as pillars of the state are the chief contributing factors to this relationship.

Methodology and Parameters of Study
This work will be primarily focused on the Al Saud and Hashemite dynasties and their relationships with the armed forces, from the years of their territorial consolidation (the years following the First World War) to the present day (2018). It is concerned, however, not simply with those factors immediately pertinent to the military, but the roots of those relationships in the structural and regional environment they operated in. The work begins with an analysis of some of the prevailing literature on military intervention, with particular focus on works on the Arab Middle East. These works are used to build an understanding of those factors which inform the logic and nature of civil-military relations in authoritarian systems. This work then seeks to employ an analysis of the histories of these societies in order to better apprehend the structural conditions which gave rise to their civil-military relations. An analysis is undertaken of the Hashemite and Saudi military establishment, their history, organization, deployment, and counter-coup measures employed, and is used to frame an explanation of the success of these monarchies in retaining control of their militaries. Certain historical developments are then identified which immediately concerned the role of the military establishment in domestic politics and are the subject of concerted focus. The events are examined with a mind to the regional, domestic, organizational and personal factors which construct the context which surrounds them. The developments themselves are used to demonstrate the nature of monarchial politics and how such a regime type shapes the nature of its relationship with the military.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter II will lay out the theoretical literature which deals with civil-military relations in circumstances of coups and revolutions. This literature will be used to better illuminate the
patterns of authoritarian rule and the dynamics of military intervention. Chapter III will look to
the case of Saudi Arabia. It will examine the Saudi coercive apparatus, how it is constituted and
how it relates to the civilian government. Then three instances of particular import in
understanding their civil-military relations will be examined in depth: the abdication of King
Saud in 1964, the discussions surrounding Abdullah’s appointment as Deputy Crown Prince in
1977 and the current machinations of Saudi politics as they relate to control of the National
Guard. Chapter IV will provide a similar case study for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The
Jordanian Arab Army will be subject to a concerted focus, and then the analysis will turn to two
case studies. The cases under consideration will be; the 1957 Events at the camp of al-Zarqa, the
1970 Black September civil war. Chapter V will offer conclusions and a consideration of their
implications.
Chapter II. Literature Review

Scholarship which is concerned with authoritarian civil-military relations concedes as its greatest influence the role the coup has played in modern politics. The coup, it is said, and the threat thereof, renders up the stability of authoritarian governance as the crude arithmetic of force. New regimes are quick to learn, especially in an environment where the precedent has been set, that the armed forces should be quickly grappled to the regimes breast or kept at a safe distance. In this chapter we shall look at scholarship which seeks to explain direct military intervention; when and why it materializes, how it plays out, and how it can be stopped.

James Quinlivan, writing in *Coup-proofing its Practice and Consequences*, was concerned with explaining why it was the Iraqi military did not move against Saddam in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. His work demonstrates that, even in circumstances of waste and privation, such as Iraq faced under sanctions, a regime can insulate itself against agitation from within the armed forces. He serves to illuminate the reality that regimes can effectively neutralize the military’s *capability*, and in some cases the *will*, to intervene in politics. In this regard he identifies five measures used by regimes, particularly in the Middle East, to achieve a coup-proofed domestic setting.

1. **The exploitation of special loyalties be they ethnic, sectarian or family**: On the surface, this seems the most self-explanatory. Simply create armies out of groups whose loyalty is assured, and you need not suspect them of a coup. By tying particular groups directly to the regime (assuring its members posts in the bureaucracy and the military),
their fates become intertwined and the threat posed by the collapse of the regime for all its number becomes acute. This rationale played out in the Syrian and Bahraini uprisings, where loyalty to the regime was determined along explicit sectarian lines. The implications of the exploitation of special loyalties are perhaps more far-reaching than Quinlivan and others might concede. It begs the examination of the state and society itself, that a regime can fall back upon such narrowed avenues of loyalty and legitimacy. The group politics upon which this factor is based belong to states, especially ruling monarchies, who have not adopted for themselves the organizing principle of modernity, namely nationalism. We will find that the failure of the ideas of nationalism and the triumph of a monarchial system create the conditions in which an institution like the Saudi Arabian National Guard can be created, out of tribal loyalties which were last meaningfully invoked in the 1920s and 1930s.

2. The creation of parallel military structures to balance against the regular military:

Above all other efforts this is the most overt. Having two armies, or at least a dedicated counter-coup force, constrains the options available to coup plotters. The parallel, or dedicated counter-coup force, is often constituted along lines of special loyalty as described above. This allows it to be better equipped and deployed in strategic corridors of the state to intercept other army units in the event of upheaval. The Iraqi Republican Guard and the Saudi Arabian National Guard are two of the best examples of such forces. The Iraqi Guard was rarely deployed in combat, except, as it were, when the “navel of the state was touched,” in the more desperate days of the Iran-Iraq war. It was

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kept around Baghdad as a highly mobile, primarily infantry, force. We shall find that this mobility is integral to the function of such units, especially the Saudi National Guard, which has a broader internal security role.

3. **Establishment of (overlapping) security agencies with broad remit:** This effort is not designed to directly impede the capabilities of the soldiery, but rather to keep constant watch over them, to weed out the suspect and anticipate and interrupt plotting. The overlapping nature of these agencies fosters a competitiveness which circumvents the puzzle Juvenal posed. With such a system, there are watchers to watch the watchers. The intelligence apparatus of Ba’athist Iraq has been often cited as the realization of this measure. After a coup attempt in 1973 from within the sole internal security service, the services metastasized and were made to watch each other. Both Saudi Arabia and Jordan employ this measure, though to varying degrees of intensity. Saudi Arabia had maintained several large intelligence agencies, both within the Ministry of Interior and independent of it. Recently, as of 2017, the regime has begun consolidating the intelligence apparatus, a development which we will discuss later in the work. While certainly employed toward the end of regime security, they also served the dual function of providing high ranking princes with their own ministerial fief. We shall find that King Hussein of Jordan employed this measure in the lead up to the crisis of 1970 in order to circumvent the increasing influence of Palestinians in government.

4. **Cultivating professionalism/expertness in the military proper:** Quinlivan touches upon, though does not effectively clarify the logic of this effort. He invokes Samuel Huntington in defining his standards for professionalism though manages to avoid the

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4 Ibid. 150
cultural/ideational implications of such an idea. His analysis focuses on the implications of expertness on the military’s evaluation of the risks and challenges of staging a coup. In this he makes some significant points, that a military of some expertise will realize the implications of parallel forces and overlapping intelligence services. These factors complicate an already complicated endeavor, creating more moving parts and a greater chance of discovery. That these forces may require destroying rather than mere neutrality compounds their estimates as to the forces required for an effective coup. This reasoning approximate to a degree the assumptions underpinning Naunihal Singh’s work (see below), that the dynamics of a coup are conditioned by the soldiery’s inclination to avoid high costs and civil war. The idea of professionalism and expertness also carries with it normative and ideological implications that Quinlivan does not reckon with. A professional military, as Huntington understands it, is one which would “carry out the wishes of any civilian group which secures legitimate authority within the state.”

Professionalism thus has in it assumptions of legitimacy. This has implications for those circumstances where we find a military capable (unchecked) but quiescent in the face of civilian authority.

5. **Funding (or more precisely, distributing the largess of the state to members of the military):** The logic of this factor seems perfectly evident, that the state buys the loyalty of the officer corps (at the least), and other armed elements (such as within the security services). For many of the states of the Middle East whose economies suffer mightily from unemployment, a large scale bureaucracy and security service have served as a mechanism for extending the patronage of the state to a wide section of the populace

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5 Ibid. 153.
while tying regime loyalists closer to the regime. This is very much the case in Jordan where the bureaucracy is composed almost entirely from East Bank Jordanians (the realization of the above mentioned ethnic stacking), though structural reforms sought by the IMF have increasingly come to threaten this arrangement. We shall find that Saudi Arabia, with its abundant oil wealth, certainly employs it toward this end. The extent to which it has been anything more than auxiliary to the other factors is suspect. Oil wealth will remain, regardless of the regime in place. As such, the scenario is conceivable where the wealth of the state and control of it, would be a driver of a coup, rather than an impediment to one. In such a case, the overall influence of largess as opposed other factors may be limited. In some cases, as with Saudi Arabia, a network of material benefits is extended to the soldiery in the National Guard, and their families. Such a measure, when coupled with the tribal stacking which characterizes the guard, certainly compounds the incentives for loyalty, and makes a disruption of that system seem all the more unappealing.

Coup-proofing, as illuminated by Quinlivan, comes to define and shape much of how civil-military relations are understood in authoritarian regimes. The logic of it turns on regimes’ recognition that the military can pose an existential threat to their hold on power. Some of these measures attempt to strike out at the capabilities of the military, to circumvent the logic of crude force. Other measures try to legitimize the regime in the eyes of the military. Such measures, as laid out by Quinlivan, do not account for how states, their militaries, and the populace at large, understand this legitimacy. Approaching civil-military relations simply from the perspective of

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what regimes do to neutralize the military ignores the conditions which make such efforts possible and cannot account for why these arrangements break down. How the military figures in the national ideology/ethos of the country shapes how regimes undertake coup-proofing. Further, coup-proofing can eventually break down. Crisis in the state is the usual prerequisite for a coup and the Arab Spring has demonstrated the extent to which a massive crisis from below creates an opening for the military to circumvent traditional coup-proofing. While our cases do no immediately trade in the realm of national strikes and vertical crisis, the logic of them is helpful in framing questions of legitimacy and ideology in civil-military relations.

Naunihal Singh provides a healthy check to discussions of legitimacy and nationalism. His work, *Seizing Power*, seeks to understand how coups play out and under what circumstances they succeed. He approaches the problem of coup dynamics from a rational choice perspective, finding that the logic of coups relies on coordination among units above all else. To him a coup is neither a contest of military strength nor a referendum on the leadership. Such is rooted in several assumptions: that a coup is a matter internal to the military, that each actor within the military is inclined to be on the winning side, and that the goal of actors in a coup is to avoid developments which might lead to civil war (splits within the military) or punishment for being on the wrong side. Thus, the goal for challengers and incumbents is a matter of manipulating expectations within the military which become self-fulfilling. The “winning side” is determined by “making a fact.” Plotters attempt to demonstrate that they have, in launching a coup, initiated a process of decline for the regime which is irreversible. To do so entails creating conditions of tacit support among other units by silencing the regime’s ability to give orders or shape the narrative of events, while simultaneously manipulating expectations of outcomes in such a way

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as to make siding with the regime appear the riskier course. For the incumbent, it is the reverse
course, that being to demonstrate that the coup is in the process of being defeated and that it has
no hope of success. For both it is all about creating circumstances of shared, common knowledge
within the military.

Singh serves to remind us that, for all this talk of legitimacy our case studies have
experienced coup attempts, or at least plots. In this regard we must remember that, at the end of
the day, coup dynamics matter. These monarchies may, in fact, have gotten lucky, blessed with
incompetent plotters and clever regime maneuvers. Or their coup-proofing worked, and the plots
were foiled, broken on the levy of a state organized around retaining power. We will find that the
plots in Saudi Arabia and Jordan materialized in just those population centers which the regime
distrusted and prepared to counter. Further, as was the case in Saudi Arabia, the plotters lurked
within the air force, which is not terribly well suited to staging a coup. We will see in the 1957
incident in Al-Zarqa in Jordan, whether it be a reactionary coup by the King, or a Free Officers
coup interrupted, that the physical presence of the King did much to reassure the military of the
strength of pro-monarchy forces and their “inevitable” triumph.

Edward Luttwak wrote an influential work on the coup d’état which framed the dynamics of
successful coups d’état. The styling of his work as a *Practical Handbook* reflects his primary
desire to explain how coups play out. This was a valuable exercise on his part and did much to
influence Quinlivan’s writing (see above), but for our purposes we are more concerned with his
evaluation of the structural preconditions for coups.⁹ One significant premise which Luttwak
operates from is that coups are a modern phenomenon, with a logic which differentiates them
from the sort of palace intrigues which confronted such the Roman Empire or the Ottoman

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⁹ Quinlivan, *Coup Proofing*, 132
Divan. His reasoning follows as such, that the modern bureaucratic state reflects a distinction between the bureaucrat as “an employee of the state and as a personal servant of the ruler.”¹⁰ This distinction is the result of the politics of nationalism which detaches sovereignty from a small group or individual, and distributes it among a larger imagined community, which is the nation. In such a societal context a coup then seeks to sever the connection of the political leadership to the bureaucracy, believing that the bureaucracy belongs more to the state than an individual. This will be an important distinction moving forward as it reflects why the politics of monarchy and practice of ethnic stacking in the military and bureaucracy has been so successful in curtailing praetorianism.

Florence Gaub, writing in Guardians of the Arab State, set about identifying the preconditions for coups d’état. Her work recognizes that the military is an actor within a broader socio-political context and as such the mere capacity to throw is not the only determinate of military intervention. Her analysis revolves around four preconditions for coups.

1. **Institutional Capacity:** This precondition is the most familiar given our discussion of Quinlivan and coup-proofing. Gaub holds that intervention is a military and collective enterprise which requires a minimum of cohesion and professionalism. Mirroring Quinlivan’s conclusions about the consequences of coup-proofing, Gaub holds that these efforts come at “a military price.”¹¹ If militaries are without a structure accommodating of meaningful action, then intervention is largely out of the question. Capacity for Gaub then is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for explaining intervention. If capacity is measured in terms of military hardware then resting upon this condition alone,

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we would be unable to explain the civil-military relations of many authoritarian regimes, including the ones in this study. The Saudi regular army, that element of the Saudi establishment least trusted by the regime, is also the best equipped. If it came to blows between the army and the National Guard, the military balance would favor the army (though not without significant cost). It’s deployment, however, suggests that it is not positioned in such a way as to stage a coup without marching on the capital, likely initiating an intense fight.

2. **Military Interest:** The logic of this precondition, too, follows from prior examinations of coup-proofing and is self-evident. If a military has no desire to intervene in politics, it will not. Gaub explores the various grievances and rationales for intervention, from financial considerations to bureaucratic competition, a discussion which prizes organizational imperatives though does not hold that they are the only consideration. She tellingly concludes that a coup is born out of a “pool of frustrations” of which organizational slights are only a part.\(^\text{12}\) The logic, however, is clear. A military likely won’t budge if it finds itself comfortable with the present arrangements or finds the risks of budging to be too high. To remain with our discussion of the Saudi regular army, simply because the Saudi military could beat the SANG toe-to-toe in the field, does not mean that the costs involved would be worth the expenditure of blood and treasure.

3. **Civil-military relations undone:** This precondition reflects the “why” of military intervention. Gaub rightly observes that militaries are responding to a perceived failure in the civilian government when they intervene, one which is significant enough to challenge the legitimacy of civilian rule. In some cases, it may be that the legitimacy of

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\(^{12}\) Ibid, 50.
the regime is suspect primarily in the military’s eyes, highlighting the degree to which the military can become an important constituency in its own right. A crisis, especially as was witnessed in the Arab Spring, created openings for the military to act without the approbation of the populace.\textsuperscript{13} We will find for our cases that failures of leadership in the monarchy were not seized upon by the military as there exists mechanisms within royal families to self-correct. The family was still understood to be the legitimate authority. The acquiescence of such forces as the SANG during the Saud-Faisal crisis is reflective of the tribal values such an organization espoused. Theirs was a willingness to permit another family unit to sort itself out, coupled with an organizational and culture dependence upon the success of that family.

4. **Social Capital:** This is a striking feature of Gaub’s analysis. It is reflective of the belief that military intervention represents a departure from the normal proceedings of domestic politics, and that the circumstance of it connotes a particular societal ethos. While there is little that the broader populace can do to arrest the process of military intervention, the image that they have of the military informs what the military will think itself permitted to do. In the post-colonial world, the military often assumed the trappings of the “modernizer,” the force for change and advancement that would help the nation jettison its backwardness. Nasser’s Free Officers are evocative of this sort of ethos.\textsuperscript{14} In the event of crisis, too, the military may seem a balanced, national force, capable of stabilizing a crisis. The intervention of the Tunisian military in the upheaval of 2011 serves to reflect this purpose.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 73.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 85.
The most important conclusion to be drawn from her work is that certain structural conditions, varying from country to country, have bearing on the incidence of coups. Approaching civil-military relations from the regimes perspective, that being, those efforts the regime undertakes to make coups difficult, ignores those conditions which make coups more or less likely.

**Conclusions**

The literatures stresses two forces which work upon the military and condition their relationship to the regime in power. The first are those material considerations which either make difficult the plotting or carrying out of a coup or make generally appealing the status quo. These forces are manifest in the coup-proofing measures regimes employ, and as made plain by Quinlivan and Singh. There exists a certain material calculus within a military which weighs the costs and benefits of subordination and the costs and benefits of revolt. It is this calculus which often receives the greatest focus in literature on civil-military relations. Further the hand of the regime can be seen most plainly in it, as the regime has a more direct influence over these forces. We shall see that in the cases under consideration, the regimes make prolific use of coup-proofing measures to inform the material calculus of the military and that these measures have certainly played a hand in curtailing any nascent praetorianism. This being said, these considerations cannot provide the full picture of civil-military dynamics. Alongside these material forces are ideational/structural ones. The military, as Gaub and Luttwak made plain, does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a larger society out of which it draws certain cultural and ideational imperatives. It is from this societal context that the military approaches the legitimacy of the regime as well as its (the military’s) own place within the society. The ideational forces, concerned as they are with legitimacy, carry with them broader implications about the society
which the military serves to defend. We shall see that ideas of legitimacy within the military can be fitted into a larger discussion of the politics of nationalism and the politics of monarchy. In this we shall find, as Luttwak noted, that the politics of nationalism make great allowances for the role of the military in domestic politics. It is no coincidence that those plots which did materialize in these countries were drawing upon Arab nationalist inspiration. In monarchy, however, constituted from traditional societies, the avenues of political participation narrow. Allegiance proceeds along familial lines and is reflected in the civil-military arrangements of these countries which are constituted as much as possible along tribal lines and with tribal values.
Chapter III. The Saudi Coercive Apparatus

The Saudi military establishment was constituted, and exists only to serve, the Saudi royal family. Its continued subservience to it, and the heavy hand of monarchial control within the military hierarchy means that any independent bent within the armed forces would require an ideational shift on the part of the non-royal officer corps. Until they understand themselves to be a national force which is separate from the regime rather than servants to the monarchy, theirs will be a continued acquiescence to the political status quo in the kingdom.

Certain factors stand in the way of this development of a national esprit de corps. First, the Saudi military has never fought a defensive war against an invading force, nor colonial overlord. In such a regard, the military establishment has never truly had the chance to cultivate an image of itself as the defender of the nation. The one major opportunity to nurture such an identity, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, was nullified by the presence of an enormous American force, invited by the royal family, because of the inadequacy of the military itself. There has been no baptism of fire which carried the requisite symbolism to spur a cultural shift in the soldiery. Second, the development of the military alongside the monarchy, coupled with the abundance of oil wealth, has taken from the military a modernizing impulse as may be observed in armed forces during the 1950s and 1960s like the Egyptian military. While other militaries have served to correct the perceived backwardness of their societies and carry them into modernity, the Saudi military establishment (in particular the SANG), in its creation by the Saudi monarchy, has been a pillar of their more traditional society and had in it no impulse to assume
the burdens of state-building. Furthermore, the largess of oil wealth, coupled with the
involvement of the US and UK in the modernization of the armed forces, has been able to fuel
state-building and modernization efforts without the perceived need for military intervention.

Third, the nature of monarchial politics is such that these security forces have essentially been
the personal fief of the prince who commands them. Since the early 1960s, until very recently,
the two main branches of the military (the regular army and SANG), have been under the
command of the same two individuals, Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz and Prince (later King)
Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz. Their personal involvement has blurred the lines between the civil and
military establishment, tying the fortunes of officers to the political fates of their masters, but not
involving them directly in politics itself. Fourth, and finally, the ideological orientation of Saudi
society, in particular along lines of Wahhabism, but also with regard to the tribal/kinship
organization of politics, creates a litmus test in recruitment. The soldiery in vital security
branches continues to be drawn from those segments of society committed to the Saudi family
and its alliance with the Wahhabi religious establishment. Traditionally this has been from the
settled areas of the Najd, the historical home of the Saudi family and the Ikhwan.

This is not to say that the monarchy has trusted the military establishment to retain this
apolitical disposition. Indeed, the history of the royal family is a legacy of deep distrust and
existential dread at moments of crisis. As such they have engaged in what is best styled rigorous
coup-proofing measures. Their purpose is twofold; to reinforce the political obeisance of the
armed forces, checking the possibility of action against the royal family and simultaneously,
checking the absolutist excesses of family members themselves. The most explicit of these coup-
proofing efforts has been the continued existence of two armies in the Kingdom. The SANG has
been the legitimizing pillar in the armed forces, the echo of the religious and tribal traditionalism
espoused by the regime. Meanwhile, the regular army has been, theoretically, the defender of the territorial sovereignty of the Kingdom. In this capacity, however, it has never been permitted to act alone. The United States has served as the ultimate guarantor of Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty. The existence of these two forces is only explicable, therefore, through the logic of coup-proofing and balancing. The SANG prevents the less ideological regular army from threatening the regime’s existence, while the army itself, aside from being the personal fief of the Sudairi, provides a counterweight to the zeal of the SANG. Increasingly, however, the forces of the Ministry of Defense have been employed to project power abroad in a bid for regional dominance, a development which is like to change the standing of the regular army in the domestic calculus.

In the picture of Saudi civil-military relations laid out above, it may be said that the lack of praetorianism in the Saudi military is overpredicted. What use is a discussion of military nationalism if traditional coup-proofing is like to have managed the job well enough? Praetorianism in a society is conditioned by more than just the material balance of power between the civil government and the coercive apparatus. The circumstance of military intervention is ultimately the success of an idea, namely, that the military is an appropriate instrument of domestic politics. An incidence of coup plotting, such as seeks to overthrow the establishment, constitutes the failure of the civilian government to legitimize itself before the military (its most important constituency). Our concern with these monarchies is to explain not just the success of the Saudis or Hashemites staying in power, but also the lack of agitation within the armed forces which was capable of overturning the establishment. As Nasserism and the example of the Free Officers gained currency, on what ideas were these militaries founded such that the core of support was immune to that agitation? As such, Saudi civil-military
The Saudi Arabian National Guard

Intro- Security Goals

The Saudi Arabian National Guard (hereafter, SANG), is best understood as a mobile, light infantry force for internal security and regime security and, if necessary, an auxiliary to the regular army in national security operations. It draws its manpower from tribes whose loyalty was demonstrated in the course of the Ikhwan Revolt of 1928 (see below). It is answerable, in theory, to the King himself, though as will be further explained, has been until recently, primarily the private fief of Prince (and then King) Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. It is not, however, a personal royal guard. There had existed an independent regiment of the Royal Guard however it was absorbed into the Ministry of Defense after Saud’s abdication.15 The role of the SANG, according the Office of the Program Manger (more on this entity later), is one of support, both for the Ministry of Interior in defense of Holy Sites and oil facilities, and for the Ministry of Defense in a national/border security capacity.16 Further the OPM SANG identifies nation-building exercises as within the remit of the SANG, in particular an annual festival called the Janadriyah. The extent to which we should be prepared to call such exercises as the Janadriyah nation-building is certainly up for debate. The festival is a celebration of “national folklore,” primarily the Bedouin heritage of the country.17 The ideology of the SANG, drawn as it is from

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17 Teitelbaum, *A Family Affair: Civil Military Relations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. 8
tribal and Bedouin stock suggests that such a celebration is hardly national, but designed to reinforce traditional values which the monarchy and the SANG serve to defend. These values, including kinship ties, the relationship of the Al Saud to Islam and the tribes, are hardly national. Instead they are oriented around placing the monarchy at the center of Saudi political and cultural life. To the missions outlined by OPM SANG should be added the defense of the royal family, generally, and further as the coercive instrument of first resort against dissidents (be they the Shi’a of the Eastern Province or AQAP).

History

The modern force of the SANG has its history in the force of tribal levies known as the Ikhwan who served Ibn Saud in his reassertion of Saudi hegemony in the peninsula. The Ikhwan were a religious-tribal levy formed from the Bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula. The missionary activities of the Wahabi ulema had brought under the Saudi yoke, and lent to them a zeal for proselytizing which, coupled with the traditional Bedouin enthusiasm for raiding, made them the backbone of ibn Saud’s conquest of the Peninsula. For many of the Ikhwan leaders this Saudi bid for hegemony was hardly unfamiliar. Existing on the frontiers of empire, and driven by the logic of raiding and booty, there was little to contain the plundering instinct of the unsettled peoples. Their raiding carried them into the Hijaz from which the Hashemites were driven, and the holy places of Mecca and Medina served to galvanize the religious establishment behind ibn Saud. The Ikhwan leaders, however, haughty and proud as they were, thought of him as little more than princeps inter pares, alongside whom they would have rights of consultation and consent. This impulse exists not only within the tribes, but within families themselves. Raiding continued into southern Iraq and the mandate territory of Jordan, however as the booty ran out, and the
inglorious task of territorial consolidation confronted Ibn Saud, the sympathies of the Ikhwan for his rule abated. From 1927 to 1930 the leaders of this loose tribal confederation split from his rule and attempted to seize prominent territories in the Hijaz before eventually being driven toward Kuwait. At this point the British, fearful of a possible allegiance between the Ikhwan and the emirs of Kuwait, committed elements of the RAF to suppressing the rebellion. The leaders of the revolt were eventually executed, while the faithful would go on to form the National Guard.

Its metamorphosis into a proper, modern, fighting force was initiated by Abdullah. The business surrounding Saud’s abdication and the rising threat of Nasserism in the regular army encouraged a force expansion within the SANG. It was itself the principle regime prop, though was without the capacity to resist any regional challenger in the field. As such, and given the instability of the region, the regular army and air force was expanded alongside the SANG. In 1979 the SANG faced its first real deployment against an internal challenge. The disturbances among the Shi’a of the Eastern Province, in particular the eastern city of Qatif, coupled with the 1979 Grand Mosque siege, ignited fears within the Kingdom of sectarianism and religious extremism. We shall explore the centrality of the guard to dispute over the succession, especially as regards the Fahd-Abdullah split and the efforts Abdullah employed to raise the standing of the guard during his reign. The SANG was made a ministry in 2013.

**Relationship to Foreign Powers**

The SANG, integral as it is to the survival of the monarchy, has a long standing relationship to the great power patrons of the Saudi state; the UK and the United States. Beginning in the 1960s after Abdullah assumed control, the UK undertook to train and equip the

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SANG, part of a larger program of arms sales to the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{19} This was continued until the late 1970s when the United States took over that function. The OPM SANG was established in 1973 (the Office of the Program Manager) to continue the SANG Modernization Program, equipping and training the SANG to fulfill its internal security mission. This mission has been vital both to improve the combat functions of the SANG (which proved to be woefully inept during the 1979 Mosque incident) and to creating a force which was equal to the regular army, and a meaningful counterweight to the Sudairi controlled MoD.

**Current Force Posture/Deployment/Organization**

Current Former Commanders (before 2013)/Ministers-

Prince Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdul-Aziz (Dec. 2018-present)

Prince Khalid bin Abdul-Aziz bin Muhammad (Nov. 2017-Dec 2018)


Prince Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz (1962-2005)

Estimates as to the force sizing of the SANG over the years vary, though there is some agreement that it at least has approximated the regular army. Contemporary estimates at 100,000 seem an appropriate amount for our purposes, not including irregulars.\textsuperscript{20} It is organized into 11 brigades; 5 Mechanized Brigades, 5 Infantry Brigades, and one Special Security Brigade.\textsuperscript{21} Their placement in the country betrays a concerted effort to thwart anti-regime mobilization of the regular army, and to counter agitation in the Eastern Province. Three Brigades are placed just


outside of Riyadh and a fourth in Hofuf. The others are dispersed in strategically vital areas to protect oil facilities, as well as to continue the prosecution of a suppressive campaign in the eastern city of Qatif. The irregulars of 28,000, a force of tribal levies known as the *Fouj*, complements the regular force and is deployed in such a way as to fulfill a counter-coup function.\(^\text{22}\)

**Coup-Proofing**

The SANG is the best positioned force in Saudi politics for asserting itself domestically. It forms what might be conventionally understood as the parallel, counter-coup, force. Its general remit and strategic positioning in the Kingdom are such that it stands prepared to intercept movements by the regular army toward the capital as well as other strategic and symbolic centers that would be seized during a coup (that being oil installations and the Holy Places). It’s mobile character, but general want of heavy weapons and armor, suggest that deploying it as anything but a final reserve in an inter-state conflict would be ill advised. With such a deployment the regime must fall back upon other forms of coup-proofing to ensure the SANG’s passivity. This is achieved through a number of measures: 1) The SANG recruits from tribal groups whose adherence to the traditions espoused by the monarchy renders them compliant with the regimes politics. The tribal character of the SANG is thus a reflection of the ideology and politics of the monarchy, prizing kinship and familial politics. Such a disposition, as we shall see, is not accommodating of the politics of nationalism. 2) The ties of the SANG to the monarchy have been reinforced through the expansion of the material rewards of loyalty. The regime has developed a robust healthcare and education sector, composed of a network of military cities.

\(^{22}\) Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, *Mapping the Saudi State*. 3
with hospitals and schools to care for the Guardsmen and their families.\textsuperscript{23} 3) The fecundity of the royal family is such that much of the top brass has either been a member of the royal family (in particular the Commander/Minister), or within that feudal patronage network. We shall see that this royal control of the armed forces has implications for the succession and the progress of absolutism in the family.

The Ministry of Defense and the Royal Saudi Land Forces

Intro- Security Goals

The regular armed forces under the Ministry of Defense and Aviation have a conventional function. Their role is generally understood to be that of national defense and, of late, projecting power abroad. They are organized in five branches; the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF), the Royal Saudi Navy, the Royal Saudi Air Forces (RSAF), the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces, and the recently constituted Royal Saudi Strategic Missiles Force. Like the SANG, the regular army and the Ministry of Defense and Aviation have served as the personal fief of the Sudairi branch of the royal family, led as it has been by Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz from 1963 until his death in 2011. His full brother Salman assumed control, and then passed the Ministry to his son upon assuming the throne in 2015.

The external threats facing the kingdom have changed over the years, though the answer to them largely has not. The United States, through arms sales and explicit defensive arrangements, has ever been the bulwark and guarantor of the kingdom’s defense. This being said the Saudi military has expanded in answer to changes in the regional system and in recent years has undergone large scale force expansion. Initially the threats to the Kingdom were the...

\textsuperscript{23} Teitelbaum, “A Family Affair,” 7.
product of the strategic rivalry known as the Arab Cold War. The collapse of neighboring monarchies in Yemen and Iraq, and the ensuing civil war in North Yemen, shaped much of Saudi strategic thinking. Following events in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War, the threat environment shifted eastward. The ballistic missile exchanges which characterize the War of the Cities spurred the development of the Royal Saudi Strategic Missile Force. It was not until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, however, that the inadequacy of Saudi military capabilities was laid bare. The regular army was hovering at around 40,000 active personnel in 1990 with which to face down Saddam’s battle hardened divisions.²⁴ Thereafter a large scale force expansion was embarked upon to bring the security services up to muster, and to prepare it to meet stronger conventional threats. At present (2018/19) the Saudi strategic outlook involves balancing against Iran and their proxies in the region. This has led to a prolonged intervention in Yemen begun in 2015, in which a GCC bombing campaign against the Houthi militia has constituted the greatest part.

**History**

The loyalties of the regular armed forces have been traditionally held as suspect by the royal family. Several coup plots materialized over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, in particular within the Air Force, which have reinforced these suspicions.²⁵ Initial attempts at establishing a regular force were fitful. Former Ottoman and Hijazi officers were part of the original force, under the Defense Ministry founded in the 1940’s. The army, however, suffered

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from desertion and neglect by the monarchy. Its growth was slow and marred by a distrust which was inflamed by the success of the Free Officers in Egypt. It was deployed along the border with Yemen in support of the deposed Imam, but mainly in an observational capacity. Defections by Air Force officers were discouraging, and the air force was grounded on several occasions. In 1969 a conspiracy was discovered amongst the officers of the RSAF, though it had not yet initiated any meaningful action. It Nasserist origins did much to reinforce the royal family’s reliance on the traditional loyalties of the SANG, on whom it leaned during the spate of indiscriminate round-ups which followed the discovery of the plot. The distrust began to abate in the years following Nasser’s death, as the tide of revolution and Arab nationalism began to recede. Authoritarianism in the Arab world began to find comfortable civil-military arrangements and the regimes in place by 1973 persisted into the 21st Century. The size of the RSLF continued to be kept artificially until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait showed Saudi defensive forces to be utterly unprepared, despite the enormous expenditure. Since then, an expansion of the force has been undertaken, continuing to the present.

**Relationship to Foreign Powers**

Since 1944 the United States has played a role in the Saudi military establishment. The centerpiece of this relationship has been the establishment of the United States Military Training Mission (USMTM), a part of US Central Command (CENTCOM). The mission was formally established in 1953 and has served both to modernize the forces and facilitate the transfer of weapon systems. Through the USMTM and the arms purchases, Saudi Arabia has poured more

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26 Ibid. 156
resources into the RSAF than any other branch. This has been in spite of the fact that the Air Force has traditionally been the “hotbed” (relatively speaking) of interventionism and political agitation. The rationale for this emphasis may be twofold: 1) given Saudi Arabia’s relatively small population in relation to its strategic rivals the Air Force provides the Saudi military the greatest capacity to project power absent a large ground force. 2) The Air Force, despite its history as an agitator, is not terribly well suited to throwing a coup. Any action on its part would require coordination among the ground forces, something which the heavy hand of monarchy is not accommodating of. The USMTM exemplifies one of the major fixtures and shortcomings of the Saudi defense establishment, which is the reliance on the United States itself. Foreign defense contractors and training by the United States serve as a crutch for the Saudi military establishment, as does the continued sale of the latest arms.29

**Current Force Posture/Deployment/Organization**

Current and Former Ministers of Defense:

Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz (2015-present)

Salman bin Abdul-Aziz (2011-2015) (King 2015-present)

Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz (1963-2011)

The forces under the Ministry of Defense number around 105,000. This is spread out between the Army (75,000), Navy (15,500), Airforce (20,000) and Air Defense and Strategic Missile Forces (4,000).30 Unlike the National Guard, it is possessed of a sturdy armored and artillery contingent, making it by far the more formidable force in the field. Its deployment,


however, is along the periphery of the state, primarily along the Yemini border and in the North East. As such it is not poised to take swift action in the domestic level, such as would allow it to act with surprise in anticipation of the mobilization of the Guard.

**Coup-proofing**

The distrust of the RSLF and the RSAF, especially during the course of the Arab Cold War, when Nasserism enjoyed great currency, spurred the regime to emphasize the role of the SANG to balance against the regular army. The ideological test for recruitment to the regular army are not nearly so stringent as those for recruitment to the SANG. The regime does, however, rely on other measures to ensure these elements are at least comfortable with the status quo. 1) Monarchial politics have played a significant role in this regard. For one, the Sudairi have turned the Ministry of Defense into a personal fief, much as Abdullah managed with the SANG. In this regard, the loyalties of the higher echelon have been, for the most part, assured. 2) At times of great stress and turbulence, the regime does not hesitate to distribute their oily largess amongst the officer corps. In the aftermath of Faisal’s assassination in 1975, salaries amongst the armed forces were said to increase by 87 percent. 3) Among other considerations which have curtailed the ambitions of the regular army must certainly be the balancing role the SANG has played. It would require more than a small cadre of officers to seriously threaten the Saudi establishment when the opposition would be 100,000 National Guardsmen. As Naunihal Singh observed, the risk of civil war is certainly a substantial consideration, especially when faced with such odds.

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31 Gaub, *Guardians of the Arab State*, 158.
Conclusions

Having established the general dynamics in the civil-military relations and coup-proofing, let us now look to a few circumstances where elements of the armed forces have been leveraged in a political capacity. Our purpose herein shall be to examine the role of coup-proofing and the lack of organizational independence in all elements of the armed forces. Further we shall look to illuminate what these occurrences suggest about the role of the monarchy and tribalism in politics as anti-national forces. We shall look to three major developments: First, the disputes between King Saud and Crown Prince Faisal over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in Saud’s abdication in 1964. From there we shall look to the Fahd-Abdullah disputes toward the end of Khalid’s reign, centering on discussions about Abdullah’s control over the SANG. Finally, we will examine the current developments in Saudi politics, beginning with the death of Fahd in 2005 through the present day (2018) as Salman and his son begin to solidify an absolutism which has until now been avoided by maintaining balance within the coercive establishment.

The Events Surrounding the Abdication of King Saud in 1964

While the King Ibn Saud, in consolidating his rule, succeeded in curtailing the ambitions of the tribes to reassert the confederate nature of Bedouin allegiance, the Arab distrust of absolutism prevailed in his family. Ibn Saud’s son and successor, King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz was to learn that the tolerance of the Saudi nobles for exclusion was low indeed. While his father had stipulated that succession was to be passed among his sons, Saud sought a rule which favored his own sons. This alone would may not have precipitated his downfall, however it happened that the man had no skill for politics, nor a sensitivity to the objections of his half-brothers. His
profligate spending and political immaturity engendered a tripartite split among the royal family, of which much has been made, and with good reason. The King and his sons formed one bloc arrayed against many of the other elder brothers. An alliance of convenience was formed among the Crown Prince Faisal, the Sudairi and other powerful half-brothers, all fearful of being excluded from power and succession. Independent of these blocs were the followers of Prince Talal, the so called Free Princes, inspired by Nasser’s Free Officers. They sought to radically restructure the Saudi Kingdom, with a national assembly and constitutionalism, among other heady ambitions. Then, as now, Saudi Arabia was unprepared for such developments, and generally unenthusiastic. Many contemporary commentators noted that neither the Saudi princes nor society at large was very receptive to ideas of constitutionalism.32

With the kingdom in the midst of financial distress and familial power struggle, the Free Princes passed their allegiance between the King and the Crown Prince, attaching themselves to their cause on the basis of their promise to implement constitutional reforms. In the years 1956-58 the incompatibility of Riyadh-Cairo relations steadily crept toward open hostility. Tensions had flared among the revolutionary states of the new United Arab Republic and the conservative states, especially given the relentless propagandizing of the Nasserist machine and the overthrow of the Hashemites of Baghdad. With an ineptitude which could only belong to him, Saud was implicated in a plot to assassinate Nasser, much to the embarrassment and shock of the other princes. What seditious spirit existed in the royal family to this point now came to a head. Curiously it has been noted that some twenty days elapsed between the revelations surrounding the plot and the presentation of an ultimatum by the princes to the king, that Saud cede power to

the Crown Prince (though not to abdicate).³³ The conclusion to be drawn therein is not only that
the royal family was unsure of how to proceed, but that the consultative impulse of the princes
was strong indeed. When the ultimatum was presented, the King quickly acquiesced.

The King, however, would not dally long before attempting to reassert his right. Doing so
entailed flaunting the austerity measures implemented by Faisal by traveling the kingdom and
distributing royal largess amongst his subjects.³⁴ By 1960 he felt confident enough to reassert his
authority by refusing to sign a budget proposal put forth by Faisal. In protest, Faisal withdrew
from government (without effectively resigning as Foreign Minister). With his absence Saud saw
an opening to secure his position and named his son Muhammad Minister of Defense. At the
time, the army under the MoD was by far the weaker of the military institutions. The Free
Officers movement had rendered its loyalties suspect, and it was deliberately kept smaller than
the National Guard. The Guard, too, was under one of Saud’s sons, Saad. King Saud’s poor
health and the Yemeni civil war occasioned Faisal’s reentry into political life. In 1961 he
rejoined government and formed a council of ministers which retained Muhammad bin Saud as
defense minister. A year later the King lost the allegiance of Talal and the Free Princes and a
coup in Yemen presaged great instability in the Saudi government. Following the defection of
several Saudi pilots to Nasser’s Egypt, Saud called on Faisal to form a new council of ministers.
This time Saud’s sons were removed from the picture and, in a move that would secure for the
Sudairi an armed camp in Saudi politics, Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz was made Minister of Defense.
In 1963 in light of developments in Yemen, Faisal appointed Abdullah to command of the
National Guard. At this point the only coercive force available to the king was his personal

³³ Ibid, 213
³⁴ Ibid, 204
guard. In this, his fate was sealed, but only in so far as Faisal was willing to circumvent the Saudi establishment. There yet lurked in the background the *ulema*, whose consent in matters of succession was sought, just as it was the princes. This jockeying for position characterized much of Saud’s reign. It finally came to a head in 1964 when the allied Princes, with control of the National Guard and the ministry of defense, demanded Saud’s abdication.

The dynamics of this palace coup are illuminating. In December of 1963, himself cloistered in his palace, surrounded by a personal guard, Saud was issued a letter which restricted his royal prerogatives merely to be consulted and sign decrees. By March of 1964 the die was cast when Saud threatened to turn the artillery of his Guard against Faisal’s personal villa. Faisal answered by ordering Abdullah to rally the SANG to him, whose loyalties had been secured, both through the personal attentions Abdullah offered it, and the generous application of *riyals*. It was said of Abdullah that Faisal needed to bring to heel his impetuosity, refusing to endorse the violent overthrow of Saud. The issue was forced instead with the intercession of the *ulema*, who issued an edict calling for Saud’s transfer power to Faisal. He surrendered in March; however, it was not until November of 1964 that Saud finally abdicate. It is likely that while the family was comfortable with forcing him from power itself, the authority of the kingship was not so easily discarded. We may assume from the intervening months that there was much deliberation about the implications of abdication and how the succession was to be handled.

In November Crown Prince Faisal assumed the throne. These events constitutes the only time that the military has been deployed in a capacity which deliberately shaped Saudi family politics. From that point on a delicate balance within the military establishment was maintained. The Sudairi solidified their control of the regular army through Sultan’s appointment in the

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36 Holden and Jones, *House of Saud*, 237
Ministry of Defense (lasting until his death in 2011) while the National Guard was turned into the sole patrimony of the brotherless Prince Abdullah, later the King. The regular army, however, continued to be limited in size and scope, fearful as the monarchy was of the revolutionary impulses which had infected the armies of their fellow monarchs in the Arab world.

**Analysis**

There is much remarkable in the story of Saud’s reign and abdication, and much anomalous when considering the regional tensions which prevailed at the time. Our concern here is twofold; both with the behavior of the Guard as a political force, and the behavior of the military as a politically neutralized force. In light of the nature of contemporary Arab politics, the suspicion would be that the Saudi military establishment would be the same hot-bed for Nasserist agitation as it was elsewhere. On a certain level this assumption is correct. The behavior of elements of the Saudi Airforce during the Yemini intervention, as well as the 1969 Coup Attempt, legitimize the distrust of the monarchy. Certainly, there was a republican/interventionist bent in the forces of MoD. Saudi Arabia, however, is unique in that the Ikhwan formed the basis of a counter-coup force well before the political situation of the Middle East called for such a mission. Ibn Saud’s success in stamping out the revolt in the late 1920’s solidified a centralized monarchial system, but still permitted a space for the tribes as the state building got underway. The loyalists of the Ikhwan, later the National Guard, formed a pillar of Saudi political society which, more so than the army proper, was representative of the popular impulses in the state. Let us now look to those factors, internal and external, which were
responsible for the outcome of Saud’s abdication, and the regular army’s neutralization as a political
force.

Regional

The regional political environment did much to shape the civil-military dynamics during the abdication crisis. The most consequential element was the pall that Nasser and his various isms cast over the monarchial world. This did not prevent cooperation between Riyadh and Cairo, indeed Saudi officers underwent training in Egypt for a time, but the example of the Free Officers, and Nasser’s relentless propagandizing, was ultimately incompatible with warm relations in the peninsula. His Free Officers were emulated, albeit incompletely, in the Free Princes headed by Talal, a styling which rather telling and ironically evokes the true nature of Saudi political system, suggestive of why their efforts ultimately came to naught. The idea of the military as the instrument of modernization and national/post-colonial restructuring as embraced by the Free Officers ultimately toppled Iraqi Hashemites and the Imamate in Yemen. The Yemeni case was to be crucial in shaping both the push for sidelining Saud, and the Defense establishment more broadly. The occasion of defections from the air force in 1962 prompted its indefinite grounding and the reliance on the US to conduct air patrols along the frontier. The MoD forces, already a marginal force in the Saudi establishment, essentially became a political non-entity. Crisis in Yemen then permitted the Princes around Faisal to secure for themselves positions in a new cabinet, positions many of the would hold until their death. The regional conditions and their domestic answer would seem to suggest that the army had hardly the capacity to be a revolutionary force, despite the discontented murmurs which issued from it.

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37 Gaub, Guardians of the Arab State, 157
Domestic Political/Structural

The effort of Saudi state-building, begun by Ibn Saud, was oriented around the shift from a tribal chieftaincy, to a modern bureaucratic state. The character of that bureaucracy, however, was that it would be treated as a ministerial fief of its princely head, to be cultivated around the personalist logic which such implies. It would be peopled by his retainers, with little intention of being representative of Saudi society broadly. This was not an explicit design, for indeed it need hardly be explicit. Ibn Saud, in passing rule to his sons, was deliberate in his establishment of a dynasty in which the concentration of power was not to leave the family. The princes of the royal blood, numerous as they were and fiercely jealous of their rank, then as now make up the substance of government. As this pertains to the civil-military dynamics of the early monarchy is plain. There was not created nor endorsed an alternative avenue for political participation outside of a relationship to the monarchy and its feudal ministries. What dissidents there were often lay outside the major tribal networks in a society which “still cherished descent and tribal origin.”

The character of tribal rule, too, is consequential in explaining the abdication. There exist in monarchy an impulse for absolutism, which is checked only by the relative strength of the nobility. For them the impulse for consultation and consent predominates, and for them the monarch must make efforts of appeasement. The legitimacy of the monarchy itself rest upon a pillar of consent from the nobility, unless the monarchy is possessed of a monopoly of power in which case the concern is to be legitimate before that source of power. In a system where the pool of potential candidates for the throne is so vast the succession proceeds nominally along lines of seniority, but with no small consideration given to capability and competence. The case

of Saud indicates the strength of the princes, both in terms of legitimacy and, after 1963 in terms of raw power (given Abdullah assuming command of the Guard), was greater than that of the king. It is remarkable, though, that Saud was willing to cede power on several occasions to Faisal, himself without an armed camp at his disposal, and indicative of the cultural force rule by consent carries.

The intercession of the *ulema* came only at the point in which the balance of power in the family was effectively resolved. The coercive apparatus had fled the grip of Saud and lay firmly with the allied brothers. As such it is perhaps appropriate to understand the *ulema*’s role as one of a rubber stamp, formalize political conditions which had been settled by the family. They were certainly a form of leverage and constituted the employ of all measures short of violence to compel Saud to abdicate.

**Organizational**

A failure of leadership such as was witnessed under Saud, is one such condition which creates an opening for military intervention. The puzzle of the crisis of 1963/64 is why both elements of the military seemed to acquiesce to the royal family sorting itself out, rather than intervening to set the state right. Part of the answer lies in the nature of monarchial and tribal politics. After the Ikhwan revolt, the loyalties of the SANG were not held in nearly so low regard as those of the regular army. Theirs was a privileged status as it was understood that the values which the monarchy espoused aligned with the values adhered to in a tribal military. Among other things, these values prized familial politics and a culture of consultation and consent within family rule. It was this culture of consent, then, that was represented in and empowered by the National Guard, an institution which exists symbiotically with the monarchy. It is an instrument
of legitimacy, designed to clarify the relationship of Saudi society to power, based upon principles of kinship and tribalism.

There was no room in the Guard for the Nasserism which might have found a home in the army. Indeed, its ideological bent made it utterly averse to the secular and nationalizing message of Nasser, representing as it did the destruction of Saudi society itself. It was itself an ideological/religious force of its own, dedicated to the tenants of Wahabism. The squabbling within the monarchy, therefore, was never an occasion for SANG to assert an ideology unique to itself for indeed, its very existence was bound up in the continued existence of the Saudi dynasty. What may be drawn from its mobilization against the sitting monarch is that it is a tool of the dynasty more than a tool of the crown. A strong actor within the Saudi state may wield it for his own political ends, just as Faisal and Abdallah did in 1964. The direct control of the SANG by a member of the royal family also served to check any potential ambitions which it might have harbored.

With the SANG generally impervious to the agitation of Nasserism, and itself being the greater pole in the military establishment at the time, the regular army had little room for maneuver. The balancing measures undertaken is reflective of classic coup-proofing measures as illuminated by Quinlivan. Balancing itself did not stop the regular army from plotting or sympathizing with Nasserism. Being kept deliberately weaker, however meant that it was no match for the SANG. Furthermore, its deployment on the border with Yemen due to the crisis there, kept from it a proximity to the halls of power which would have allowed it to participate more decisively in the succession dispute.
Personal

The dynamics of Saud’s deposition suggest that the monarch is not secure simply by sitting on the throne and his performance is being evaluated by the leading members of the family. In a state which bears the family name, its fate is the family’s fate. As such it should come as no surprise that the more capable members of the family were ill disposed to Saud’s blundering and wasteful reign. Saud was a profligate spender and incompetent in the conduct of foreign policy. Faisal, on the other hand, was least well regarded in international circles as Foreign Minister. Further, in his stints as regent he had done much to claw the Kingdom back from fiscal oblivion. The strong leadership of Faisal likely did much to reassure the tribal elements of the military establishment that the leadership crisis was being managed by a steady hand. As Florence Gaub observed, a military’s impetus for intervention is conditioned by certain civilian failures.

Saud didn’t officially abdicate until November of 1964. This is reflective of the family’s reluctance to so publicly trammel the prerogatives of the monarch. Debate was still ongoing within the family as to Saud’s fate. Faisal, the next the sit on the throne was not entirely convinced that forced-abdication was a good precedent to set. It is too, remarkable, that the matter was kept largely within the family. There was no tribal council assembled to decide the fate of monarch and kingdom, and it is a testament to the strength of tribal politics that the larger Saudi polity was comfortable letting the family sort things out on its own.

Conclusion

Through these two crises, the Ikhwan Revolt and Saud’s abdication, a picture takes shape of how the soldiery function in Saudi politics. The SANG is often understood as a counter-coup
force, which, while an accurate depiction, only explains a part of what was a wider, ideational function. Admittedly several coups and plots were detected from within ranks of the MoD, however they had few sympathies in broader Saudi society. The nationalist/Nasserist impulse was not organic to the Saudi state but was imported on the wings of Radio Cairo broadcasts and joint training missions. The MoD was sidelined in its official defensive remit, as the security of the regime by such time was the domain of SANG and the United States. While there was distinct fear of radicalization within the Army proper, the cementing of the split in the armed forces was designed to serve as a balancing mechanism for the ambitions of the great princes, and less against the particular organizational ambitions of the military itself. This is not to say that the monarchy did not harbor apprehensions regarding the military. The support for the Yemeni monarchy during the Egyptian intervention carried with it a number of defections and plots. The reality remained, however, that the greatest domestic potential for disturbance came from within the royal family proper. The culture of familial/kinship politics, reflected in both the monarchy’s internal squabbling and the tribal structure of SANG, was entrenched to such a degree that, coupled with the sidelining of the army, there was no platform from which to assert a nationalist bent. Stability in royal family politics has been rooted in division of the military establishment into ministerial fiefs, reflecting the rank and prestige due the leading princes of the family. In such a system of personalized institutions, death can disrupt with greater impunity as we shall later see.

**Succession and Control of the National Guard: Fahd and Abdullah**

If the circumstances surrounding Saud’s abdication represent the greater power of the nobility, the succession disputes which accompanied Abdullah becoming deputy crown prince
smack of a certain uneasy balance. The split in the military establishment between the National Guard and the regular Army had a twofold design. At once it served a conventional coup-proofing purpose while simultaneously reinforcing the prevailing power dynamics in the royal family, balancing the ambitions of the crown hopeful. As the revolutionary tide of the 1960s began to recede, the imperatives surrounding such a paranoid force structure lost some of their urgency. Herein we shall see, however, that the politics of the Saudi monarchy created their own need. The system of patronage and political jockeying gave rise to a power struggle that would not seem meaningfully resolved until the 21st century.

When Khalid died in 1982 Abdullah had been twenty years in command of SANG, and all of his sons were nurtured by the Guard’s martial lifestyle, that is to say, made officers. Himself brotherless in a political system where brotherhood carries unusual weight, Abdullah was married to the fate of the Guard. Sultan was similarly dug into his patrimony, as was Nayef who succeeded to the Ministry of Interior upon Fahd becoming Crown Prince. The three of them, (Sultan, Fahd and Nayef) were full brothers, part of the gang of Sudairi (the seven full brothers in a family of half-brothers) which achieved in Fahd the kingship for the first time. Their preponderance of power in the Ministerial cabinet led inevitably toward a consolidating effort. Toward this end it was desired that one of the Sudairi become Crown Prince or, if this was not achievable, then to make impossible that they should be passed over following Abdullah’s reign. This would require, so the thinking went, that Abdullah surrender the command of the Guard while Crown Prince. Abdullah, aside from being possessed of an army, had aligned with the side of the family which was suspicious of the growing power of the Sudairi. The desire for consensus and the suspicion of absolutism was to serve in this circumstance, to Abdullah’s benefit.
A word on the National Guard is valuable at this point. The Saudi National Guard by this time had undergone a substantive transformation. In 1973 the United States took over from the British a program of arms agreements and training missions for the National Guard. The Officer of the Program Manager (OPM-SANG) was set up by the US military to verse these efforts, and they worked closely with Abdullah. The general remit of the guard had grown some since its reconstitution after the Ikhwan revolt. It was charged officially with protecting the royal family, and further, overseeing the protection of the oil producing facilities in the East of the country. This was a vital charge indeed, and one as integral to US as to Saudi security. The relationship with the United States made a great deal of sense as the United States had already undertaken a role as arms supplier and trainer of the regular army. In that regard they had worked closely will Sultan, the Minister of Defense since 1963, though the training mission had begun in 1953.

The Guard, then, should be understood to be a thing entirely shaped by Abdullah and his own personal efforts. It was stocked with officers of his own choosing, and his sons had been reared in it. Prior to Fahd’s succession a schism prevailed in the family which prompted Abdullah’s control over the guard to be debated. Lines were drawn in 1977, after Khalid had named Abdullah deputy prime minister, the post being widely understood to mean crown-prince in waiting. This constituted a threat to the Sudairi’s ability to determine the succession in their favor, and indeed the move was likely designed as such. Once King, there would be nothing legally to prevent Fahd from choosing his own successor, however the insistence of major members of the royal family still carried enough weight for Fahd to raise the issue. Other, conservative elements of the family were determined to keep the succession from the Sudairi,

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and as such to use Abdullah as the instrument of this.\textsuperscript{40} Influential in checking the overreaches of Fahd and the Sudairi was Khalid’s elder brother Mohammad (passed over in the succession because of certain unresolved and un-Islamic vices). He still retained great clout within the family and was representative of the disposition of those conservative elements (the Jiluwis being of such stock) aligned against the Sudairi and their haughtiness.

The issue was forced by Fahd when Khalid was out of country for emergency treatment in the beginning of 1977.\textsuperscript{41} He demanded that Abdullah relinquish the command of the Guard, which was to be absorbed by Sultan and the Ministry of Defense, in exchange (though different versions exist) he would be made Crown Prince on Fahd’s succession. Some accounts hold that, instead, Fahd simply pressed for Sultan to be made Crown Prince instead of Abdullah. It is difficult to ascertain what would have been the more likely demand. If Fahd was sure Khalid was on his death bed, then pressing for Sultan’s confirmation as crown-prince-in-waiting might make sense (princes seeking to enter into the new king’s favor side supporting this bid). However, this would indeed have been a gamble, and alienating to yet powerful groups in the family. It is more likely that he offered Abdullah succession as crown prince while simultaneously concentrating the security services in the hands of the Sudairi. Regardless of what was offered or demanded, Abdullah refused. In August of 1977 a council of some 250 princes was reportedly convened to discuss the matter.\textsuperscript{42} The King, however had not yet died, though he was perennially ill. He recovered and the matter of Abdullah’s deputy premiership and the control of the SANG was not decided in Fahd’s favor. It was a gambit which did not pay off and, though he retained his

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40} Joseph Kechichian, \textit{Succession in Saudi Arabia} (New York, Palgrave, 2001) 96.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Henderson, \textit{After King Abdullah}, 7.
\end{flushleft}
position as crown prince, he had lost in the process some of the political leverage he hoped to have as king.\textsuperscript{43}

This political loss preceded major regional developments. 1979 saw not only the fall of a neighbor monarchy, but also unrest in both the Eastern Provinces and Mecca. The National Guard was deployed to both regions, fulfilling its suppressive role easily enough in Qatif in the Eastern Province, where its charge was to disperse Shi’a demonstrators observing the martyrdom of Hussein.\textsuperscript{44} It acquitted itself quite poorly, however in the retaking of the Grand Mosque and was eventually helped by Pakistani and French commandos. The increased relevance of the guards function in a threatening and dynamic security environment, coupled with Fahd’s political defeat in 1977, likely contributed to his acquiescence to Abdullah’s succession as crown prince upon Khalid’s death. A united front within the royal family was necessary to maintain stability in the Kingdom, making succession disputes and the concentration of military power destabilizing.

\section*{Analysis}

\subsection*{Regional}

The timing of the initial dispute over succession, 1977, preceded the shift in foreign policy focus that came with the 1979 revolution in Iran. There had been, however, a marked shift in the regional political climate away from pan-Arabism. The death of Nasser in 1977 and the preoccupation Sadat had with the return of the Sinai made Egypt a power far more accommodating of Saudi Arabia’s conservatism. Indeed, it seemed the conservative regimes had

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\item \textsuperscript{43} Kechichian, \textit{Succession in Saudi Arabia}, 96.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 99.
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won out in the ideological struggles of the Arab Cold War. The USSR still retained clients in Syria, Iraq and Libya for instance, but their anti-monarchial agitation never approached the same intensity as it had in the 1960s. The regimes in power in the major Arab states all had a longevity which suggested that the tactics of coup-proofing had proliferated throughout the region. The last monarch to be lost to nationalist/military revolution was Idris of Libya, who Ghaddafi saw off in 1969. Given this climate it is telling that the Sudairi were considering consolidating the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard, a move that would have been unthinkable in the 1960’s as potentially destabilizing and threatening to the regime. This disposition of Fahd’s likely changed with the events of 1979 and the toppling of the Iranian monarchy, which would have reinforced the need for a split security apparatus.

**Domestic Political/Cultural**

Among authoritarians, monarchies enjoy a certain predictability when it comes to the expiration of one ruler and the succession of the next. Indeed, monarchy is premised on this predictability, though it is complicated somewhat when the pool of prospective monarchs is as vast as it is in Saudi Arabia. What is remarkable, however, is that the family has managed to sort it out on its own. This being said, the competing interests of the brothers is simplified to a degree by the mutual possession of armies by the leading factions. At once, it narrows the possible succession down to those candidates these armed camps were willing to accept. After Khalid died, the succession continued to be resolved on grounds of seniority and consensus which have governed Saudi family politics. The conventions of succession in Saudi Arabia may be spelled out as such; that the succession shall pass to the son (or grandson) of Ibn Saud who is understood to be best suited to the kingship by the majority of the family. Inevitably, it seems, the succession
would belong only to the armed. It is a remarkable test of the strength of consultation that the wider family, in that council of princes in 1977, could still exert enough political will to secure the succession for a lone brother. This was done in the face of the dominance of the Sudairi, possessed as they were of both the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, some of the weightiest positions in government. In such a regard we must say that the familial and cultural impulse to respect consultation continued to color Saudi politics in this.

Colored though they were by Abdullah’s personal army, it is perhaps unreasonable to ascribe to the succession proceedings of 1977 and the Fahd-Abdullah dispute the brute logic of force. These princes, all of whom participated in the ouster of Saud in 1964, were like to believe it unbecoming of the kingdom to resort to such measures again. This being said, the balance of power within the family was such that none could effectively impose their will in an absolutist way. Over proceedings such as these must have hung the pall of potential violence. Overwhelming family consensus was the only mechanism to wrest from Abdullah the guard, but even then, if he had been dissatisfied with that consensus, what option was before the dynasty? If he had invited the king to “come and take” it from him (as the Spartan’s quipped to Xerxes), what recourse would have been before Fahd and Sultan? Here we might apply some of the principles Singh had laid out that, ultimately, avoiding civil war and useless waste can color the calculus of the military, especially considering that under the above circumstances the basic political constitution of the state is unchanged.

**Organizational**

The threat that the SANG would be absorbed by the Ministry of Defense, and become an extension of Sultan’s fief, was understood to be generally unthreatening to the survival of the
monarchy. This may be indicative of the royal family’s confidence that it had successfully employed the necessary countermeasures to avoid a coup without the continued existence of the SANG. The regime had certainly managed to organize itself around retaining power, and further the security climate appeared at the time to suggest a cooling off of tensions. As such a diminished, less balanced force, was not altogether threatening. The real threat lay in the divisions of the family itself, and the fact that its members were dug into their personal fiefs, on which they depended for their political stature. The succession dispute, despite being over the organizational independence of an entire army, did not create an opening for that force to assert itself politically, such as Gaub would look for. There was no challenge to the tribal or Islamic legitimacy upon which the monarchy rested. Further still, there yet existed the larger coup-proofing mechanism, including the Sudairi control of the Ministry of Defense, to reign in any political ambitions.

What, truly, would have happened if Fahd, as king, insisted that Abdullah could be Crown Prince or have the Guard, but not both? Was civil war worth it to either party? That sort of test of wills seems ludicrous so long as the family retains the monarchy, and its leading members are of such status in government as to match their rank in the family. It is important to note that the lines between military and civil society are blurred when the ruling family also peoples the military leadership. How then are we to understand the organizational independence of a fief? Are we really talking about the personal, rather than organizational, independence of its lord and the personal political weight they carry? To a certain extent we are. We shall see in the next section more particularly the degree to which the armed branches will acquiesce to a substantive change in leadership, though evidence of their ultimate apolitical disposition is laid in the above outlined proceedings.
The Guard’s experiences in the year 1979 do not speak well for it. Though the SANG, at the time, had not been invested in with nearly the same wanton expenditure as the regular army, its performance suggests a complacency which years of relative stability and no meaningful combat experience engendered. The incident in Mecca was perpetrated by a former SANG corporal Juhaimein bin Muhammad Utaibi, a man who thought himself capable of conjuring the spirit of the Ikhwan revolt to dismantle the decadence and Westernizing bent of the Saudi Kingdom.⁴⁵ The regime and the ulema were quick to denounce his wilder claims of having found the Mahdi, making it easier to move the SANG, given its history, against him. Heresy is easier to fight. The circumstances of the rising indicate, however, that the ideological training of the SANG could cut both ways, and that ultimately the regime must look to legitimize itself before this ideology or counter the SANG’s potential political power with the army itself, a move that 1990 made inevitable, though for different reasons.

Personal

The succession disputes of 1977 highlight the degree to which individuals excluded from the succession can still carry weight within the royal family. Mohammad, the full (and elder) brother of the King Khalid was a political force Fahd was not equipped to counter. He was able to unify the conservative opposition to the Sudairi and secure for Khalid his choice of successors, despite the King’s illness and political reticence. All this was done, effectively, without leveraging any coercive elements. Fahd, it seems, overplayed his hand in a bid for concentrated power that was too early. The clout of many of the princes, and their political and cultural relevance to the proper functioning of the monarchy was as yet invulnerable. This was like to

⁴⁵ Holden and Jones, *House of Saud*, 515.
change with the aging and death of these princes, as their sons (though experienced in the bureaucracy and military) were not the shrewd political operators that their fathers were.

It was the lack of full brothers of Abdullah’s that made him so ill disposed to surrendering control of the guard. Without such connections, he could not guarantee the continued loyalty and the political power that it gave him. This feudal system is what differentiates Saudi civil-military relations from all others. The monarchy is so deeply bound up in the military establishment that its independence as an organization is unthinkable, and the fortunes of the officers follow the fortunes of their feudal lord. This aligns with the distinction Luttwak made about bureaucrats as public servants versus as servants of the regime itself. A coup or intervention is not going to be mounted by a group which is built into the fundament of the regime. That is, until such times as the military can ideologically disassociate itself from the monarchy. Abdullah’s attempts to preserve the SANG for his sons would be manifest upon his securing the throne, though as we shall see, they proved to no avail.

Conclusions

The two branches of the Saudi military establishment, those under the Ministry of Defense, and the National Guard, served as a mechanism for balancing Saudi family politics in the years following 1964. During the reign of Faisal and Khalid the senior brothers of the family could split the authority of state three ways; the kingship would belong to the most senior, and the two armies would fall to Abdullah and the Sudairi. It was only when the kingship was to pass to an armed camp that the succession seriously became a matter of dispute, not for the crown prince, but for who was to follow. So long as the King did not have an army at his disposal, the prerogatives of the high ranking nobility could not be infringed. Fahd’s preemption of the
succession issue in 1977 was too explicit an attempt to trammel on the tradition of consensus, without the power to command, rather than to sue. As such he eventually conceded to Abdullah on both counts, and he retained the Guard and was made Crown Prince in 1982. The next meaningful succession dispute would see weaker, aged princes attempt to curtail the absolutism of the next generation, and to little avail.

The Succession of King Salman and his Son’s Adventurism

Let us now turn to the roots of the current upheaval in the line of succession. Monarchical politics has thus far dictated the manner in which the military operates, solely as a tool of the ruling family and enjoying no organizational independence which we might expect from the military establishment. Indeed, theirs is a disposition of general acquiescence to the vagaries of politics. We shall see herein that the personalism of the monarchy carries the day even as further succession struggles move in the direction of absolutism, formerly the dread specter of family politics. Abdullah’s fief, that is SANG, could not survive his death intact in its command structure. From 1963 to November 2017, the National Guard was either Abdullah’s or his son, Mutaib’s. Since the Ritz affair it passed first to Prince Khalid bin Abdul-Aziz who served therein until December of 2018, to be replaced by Prince Abdullah bin Bandar. After the dust up within the royal family in 1977, these developments seem strange indeed. It is the circumstances which made this power consolidation effort possible that we mean to examine herein.

The Saudi monarchy had existed for some time without formalizing its rule in law. King Fahd proceeded, in 1992 to set down a more robust doctrine of monarchy in the Basic Law, the closet thing in Saudi Arabia to a constitution proper (prior to this, much of the rhetoric from the monarchy claimed the Quran as the sole law-giving document). In the Basic Law the right of the
king to choose his successor was enshrined, as was the right of the Saudi family to rule. The measure was widely interpreted as an attempt to secure the rights of the king to circumvent the consensus impulse of the family and set up the Sudairi with greater power. Despite this, Fahd never appointed another crown prince other than Abdullah, likely cognizant of the objection the royal family would raise. His stroke eventually neutralized him as a political force and Abdullah’s succession was secure. When Fahd died in 2005 and Abdullah ascended to the throne, much of his early reign was dedicated to clawing back power from the brothers Sudairi, without explicitly disrupting their privileged status in government. As yet Sultan was still the Minister of Defense, and Nayef Minister of Interior. Sultan was named crown prince immediately upon Abdullah’s succession, however a deputy prime minister (or crown-prince-in-waiting) was not named, widely interpreted as a snub directed at Nayef with Abdullah hopeful that he might outlive the brothers.46

One measure employed to complicate the succession for Sultan or Nayef was the creation of a so called “Allegiance Council,” designed to empower the tradition of consent within the family in deciding the succession. The members of the council, all senior princes or their sons, were to vote on the appointment of the Crown Prince. The council, however, has consistently approved whosoever the king has appointed thus far. It was set up in 2006 and its remit was to confirm a new king and approve of the selection of crown prince.47 Doubtless this measure was designed to curtail a power grab by the Sudairi faction after his own death. It was, however, weak in that there was nothing to prevent the king from dissolving it of his own accord. It was the closest thing to an institutional countermeasure against absolutism that did not ultimately infringe on the royal prerogative. At most, it was an attempt to formalize consensus and

46 Henderson, After King Abdullah, 8.
47 Ibid.
consultation at a time when such values were like to come under threat. The waning strength of the second generation princes was not expected to carry them beyond one or two more kings. At which point, the uncertain political skill of the third generation would be tried. What was not expected by the King was the death in quick succession of Sultan (d. 2011) and then Nayef (d. 2012). The succession was still passed among the Sudairi, on to Salman (the last acceptable candidate of that family), though it increasingly seemed as though the next generation would need to be called upon. Salman became Minister of Defense on the death of Sultan. Though he (Sultan) had groomed his son to succeed him in that post

Another measure designed to preserve the balance of the kingdom and defend against the Sudairi’s encroachments was the reform of the National Guard. It was transformed into a Ministerial posting in 2013 and Abdullah’s son Mutaib, himself raised in the Guard, was made Minister of it. While Abdullah was King, the Guard was effectively secure, but once the Kingship slipped his grasp, there was little to prevent the reorientation of the Guard which eventually took place. The deaths of Sultan, Nayef and Abdullah in quick succession completely changed the dynamics of succession in the kingdom. These were the lead princes of the old generation, those with the greatest political clout with which to shape and balance the process itself. With their death came the opportunity to fundamentally change the process of succession, an opportunity seized upon by King Salman. Upon attaining the Defense Ministry with the death of Sultan, he set about stocking it with his own loyalists, including making his son Deputy Minister of Defense. When Salman ascended the throne in 2015, his son became Minister of Defense, and was given a war in Yemen to prove himself.

The most critical move in this succession was Salman’s appointment of Muhammad bin Nayef as Crown Prince, and his own son Muhammad as Deputy Crown Prince. The elderly
Prince Muqrin had four months in the post in 2015 before he resigned. Nayef’s appointment signaled at once that the succession had irrevocably passed to a new generation, and further, that it would not be shared among the larger family (Nayef being of the Sudairi). Salman then had the kingship, Defense, and few remaining princes of any political clout could be arrayed against him. In 2017 further developments shocked foreign observers but should likely have been predictable given the freedom of maneuver afforded Salman by the lack of so many capable princes. In mid-2017 he made his son Muhammad, Crown Prince. Nayef was wordlessly discarded and the Ministry of Interior, the other major branch of the security services, was defenseless before the King and his son. Restructuring was soon to follow, and in July a shakeup of state intelligence services consolidated the intelligence and counter-terrorism branches of the state under leadership which reported directly to the monarch.48 This Presidency of State Security, as it was called, represents at once the confidence that the monarchy has in its retainers, and the political weakness of the major Princes. Where once this sort of overt absolutism would have raised the ire of the family, there remain few equipped with the requisite clout to challenge the King and his son.

The final blow to potential opposition was landed in November of the same. A great many Princes and leading men of Saudi society were rounded up in a corruption crackdown and imprisoned in the Riyadh Ritz-Carlton. Most prominent and significant among them was Prince Mutaib, the head of the National Guard and son of King Abdullah. This behavior is reminiscent of the business at Al-Zarqa, smacking of a palace initiated coup which seeks to gain control of the security apparatus. Mutaib was replaced by Khalid bin Abdul-Aziz, a career officer in the

Guard. His promotion in the aftermath of this shakeup rendered him at the least politically reliable, if not explicitly for the King’s party. His tenure, however, would only last a year. In December of 2018 he was replaced again, this time by a young Prince of Muhammad bin Salman’s age, Abdullah bin Bandar. He had no previous experience within the armed or security services but had been a personal advisor to the Crown Prince and in this regard should be assumed to enjoy his complete confidence.49

From 2015 to the end of 2018 the guard had seen three Ministers, whereas for forty years it had seen only one. Where once it could have been styled securely the domain of Abdullah and his faithful, it impotently surrendered any loyalties and exerted nor independence nor organizational strength. By what is this explicable? We may indeed be drawing too stark a picture of the divisions in Saudi politics. What squabbling may prevail among the remaining sons of Ibn Saud and their own progeny may indeed be of little consequence to the soldiery, and those princes well removed from the succession. Theirs is likely a more fundamental loyalty, to the monarchy itself. This was much evidenced in the deposition of Saud in 1964, and though the SANG has doubtless changed in the years during Abdullah’s patrimony, its fundamental mission to defend the Saudi Royal Family has not. Further still, what precisely would dissident elements in the Guard do? The entire existence of the Guard is premised on the continuation of the monarchy and the society it represents. Its overthrow or disruption, such as would be necessary to preserve the independence of SANG, would ultimately pose an existential threat to the institution itself.

Analysis

Regional

The threat environment for the regime in Saudi Arabia has shifted dramatically over the years. In the early days of the Arab Cold War, Nasserism and its agitating against monarchy was certainly the most profound threat. With time, however, that abated and the kingdom experienced relative calm. That is, until the siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca illuminated the threat may not be secular in bent, but at the extreme wing of it’s own Islamist advocacy. Coupled with the Iranian Revolution, the regime began to see itself newly imperiled from within and without. It funneled money into Saddam’s war-machine only to have it on its frontier in 1990. Saddam highlighted for the Saudi monarchy the degree to which it had come to rely on American military support. A massive rearmament campaign was undertaken to bring the army to full strength alongside the National Guard. With both these tools the monarchy was better equipped to handle the advent of al-Qaeda and its sympathizers. While that threat persists, Iran’s regional ambitions have fixed the regimes attentions and it is in this context that we should understand the developments in the Saudi royal family. Dissension in the ranks of the royal family would be a weakening of the Saudi purpose in the face of Iran, and thereby a threat to the entire family. The Crown Prince’s adventurism in Yemen should be understood as the twofold checking of Iranian peninsular ambitions, and the conditioning of the army for more purposeful forays into power projection. This realignment of national security ambitions requires quietude on the home front and has likely contributed to the quelling of dissident voices within and without the family. Furthermore, it is likely that the regime can galvanize religious and patriotic sympathies in the prosecution of this war. In this regard, the regime may be compelled to style its regional
confrontations along religious and perhaps even national lines. Indeed, some have remarked upon a growing military nationalism in the Gulf States.⁵⁰

Florence Gaub observes that foreign combat experience serves manifold purposes in galvanizing a military’s potential for political intervention. At once, and most obviously, it provides it with the necessary experience of large unit maneuvers and exercises which are often denied it by the heavy handed nature of authoritarian command and control.⁵¹ Further, it lends to the military a more profound sense of organizational and cultural cohesion of which it is often said that combat alone can offer. Less tangible, though perhaps most important in some regards is the transformation the military undergoes in the national consciousness when operating as an instrument of national defense. The Saudi intervention in Yemen, begun in 2015, constitutes the first real attempt to deploy Saudi forces abroad on a mission of which they are the chief architect (their last deployment in Yemen, a series of border skirmishes in 2009, ended poorly).⁵² The invitation to American forces in 1990 seems to nullify the engendering of an independent martial spirit that might have flown with the liberation of Kuwait. While Gaub’s concern is with the potential for politicization and organizational independence in the military, the royal family politics of Saudi Arabia, especially control of the Ministry of Defense and SANG, suggest a different understanding of the Saudi military’s deployment. The commitment of land forces to battle has been minimal and instead the air force has the lead in these operations, much of which is merely indiscriminate bombing. Such is reflective of the strong Saudi bias in favor of the air force (likely because it’s difficult to through a coup from the air). In this regard, we might better

⁵¹ Gaub, Guardians of the Arab State.
understand the Yemeni War as both an attempt to check Iranian influence on the Peninsula, and further, to prepare the air force for another fight. The pell-mell bombing campaign is not reflective of a concerted effort to win in Yemen, but rather to be assured that no one wins. If the ground forces of the RSLF continue to be kept from combat, it is unlikely that there will be much in the way of a shift in the national ethos of the military.

**Domestic Political/Structural**

With the deaths of Nayef and Sultan, the pool of capable second generation princes was nearly drained, and with it, the clout to check the absolutism of Salman and his son. As we had seen in the previous cases, both Saud’s abdication and the Fahd-Abdullah dispute, the family has generally been able to contain absolutism (a major hallmark of which is control of the entire coercive apparatus) so long as there existed senior family members in control of the coercive apparatus. Their rank and status in the family meant that the monarch required legitimacy before these leading men, above all others. The lack of emphasis on consensus following the death of Abdullah is indicative of a cultural shift which came with the passing of the elder generation of princes. This being said the consolidation of the security services into loyal hands achieved by Mohammad Bin Salman renders the need for consensus effectively moot. Now the monarchy need not sue, but command. Absolutism, true absolutism, has ever been the impulse of the throne itself. Despite the roll Salman has played in the past as a conciliator, the new bent of his domestic policy is irrevocably toward absolutism.

The Princes arrested in November of 2017 were outmaneuvered and outgunned. The creation of the Presidency of State Security, with it the consolidation of the power of Interior and

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intelligence, curtailed the leverage available to the larger royal family. It was almost certainly done to head off potential obstinace in the royal family, and counter possible coup plotting.

The shakeup serves little practical function, and has indeed tested the patience of the CIA, who reportedly raised concerns about the dismantling of Interior’s counter-terrorism operations.\(^54\) It shows a remarkable confidence in those in charge of intelligence, but for the purposes of advancing absolutism it is a meaningful measure. Mohammad bin Salman seems to have been quite purposeful in the cultivating of a personal retinue of loyalists in whom he can vest such confidence, at least for the time being.

**Organizational**

Abdullah’s attempts to make the National Guard a more formidable institution by making it a Ministerial post for his son, Mutaib, were ultimately doomed to fail. While a clever tactical move, his son lacked the political standing without his father to be a spoiler in the coming succession crisis. As was the case in the succession disputes of 1977, what was Mutaib or the Guard to do when faced with an unfavorable domestic situation? Coming to blows over royal overreach remains an unrealistic and self-destructive option for any prince committed to Saudi dominance and the idea of monarchy. Mutaib was himself arrested during the events at the Ritz in 2017 and the guard budged not. Working in favor of Salman and the Sudairi generally, was their continued dominance over the Ministry of Defense which passed after Sultan’s death on to Salman. In this regard, its continuity as a fief, and Defense’s more direct relationship to the sitting monarch, made the resistance of elements within the Guard wasted effort. The Ministries

\(^54\) Neil Patrick, “Saudi Security and Defense Reform.” The CIA reportedly had a say in the appointment of the head of the Presidency, Abdelaziz al-Howeirini, who had worked closely with Prince Mohammad bin Nayef (former head of MoI) on counter-terrorism.
of Defense and Interior, both of which were possessed of robust intelligence and coercive leverage, were in the hands of the monarchy. A move against the remaining armed camp of the SANG was inevitable and essentially unstoppable. The appointment of Prince Abdullah bin Bandar, after the brief tenure of Prince Khalid bin Abdul-Aziz, appears to have secured for the Guard for the King and his son.

The behavior of the SANG, at least its passivity in this business may seem, at first, remarkable. Granted, it has not been dissolved as an institution, and is not likely to be so. In this climate of structural and governmental reform, the Guard has the capacity to return to a more conventional, counter coup function. Further, it still retains that tribal character which makes it a pillar of the regime. These encroachments on its autonomy, however, after so long a time as the fiefdom of Abdullah and sons, may leave some moldering resentments. This being said, the SANG does not have a long list of grievances to which they could add this shakeup at the top. The material advantages of continued participation in the regime, coupled with the fact that the regime and its ideology continue to align with that of the SANG, are certainly enough to enforce a complicity in the status quo. If, however, crisis prevails at the top, an opening could be created wherein the SANG could assert itself.

Half a century of modernization have likely succeeded in cultivating a professional ethos in the armed services in the Huntingtonian sense. Their increasing engagements abroad may do much to reinforce this. This sort of professionalism may have, as has been mentioned, mixed results for its proclivity for political neutrality. It may very well be, as Quinlivan suggests, that increased professionalism will be accompanied by a wariness to intervene, given the strength of

55 Ibid.
Saudi coup-proofing. Further, professionalism might carry with it an accompanying cultural subordination to the civilian government, and a cultural proscription against military intervention. At present this ethos has prevailed, at least in so far as the SANG and RSLF have been remarkable in their political neutrality. This, however, has been in a monarchial system in which command of the armed forces is exerted by members of the monarchy itself. In such a regard, the blending of civil and military control is different than as is envisioned in the ideal-type of civilian control, control which has in it nationalist suggestions of sovereignty which lies outside of a family. Thus, we should be hesitant to conclude that the Saudi military understands itself as an entity separate from the monarchy and regime.

Personal

The absence of meaningful opposition within the royal family has permitted Salman and his son to drive an absolutist line. Central to all this has been Prince Mohammad. He has become the public face of the regime and exerts the more direct control over the security apparatus. The countermeasures which Mohammad bin Salman have taken are all designed around heading off, essentially, a palace coup. His maneuvers have put him at odds with traditionalists in the family and the security services, not so much with the (formerly) unreliable regular army. On a certain level this undermines the legitimacy upon which the monarchy has come to rest, particularly the consent of the family and tribal nobility, and may have implications in the event of a large scale crisis. For the time being, however, protections against a palace coup are likely all that is required. Absent the return of a revolutionary ideology of wide appeal (such as Arab nationalism), opposition within Saudi politics will be against the person of Mohammad bin Salman, and not so much with the Saudi royal family or the monarchy itself.
Conclusions

The continued stability of the Saudi monarchy, measurable in its capacity to undertake reforms and shakeups which have threatened a few entrenched interests, is a testament both to the structural conditions of Saudi political society, and the tight control over the security apparatus that the Sudairi have managed to achieve. Abdullah’s death in 2015 marked the beginning of the end of balancing within the monarchy and the final rise of absolutism. Structurally, Saudi society is still behind the monarchy. There are no alternative national leaders, nor reformist ideology, which exists to challenge the monarchial status quo. As such, only traditionalist elements in politics could carry a meaningful counterweight to absolutism. The regime, however, has outflanked the political elite and secured control of the security services, reforming their coup-proofing strategies to be inclusive of direct regime control over intelligence and Ministry of Interior. Balance, gone though it is from the monarchy itself, still exists as the leading strategy for Saudi coup-proofing. While the SANG still exists, performing its legitimizing function, the ethnic stacking of the military has lessened in its explicit importance. There are no substantive revolutionary threats which might prevail in the regular army such as to necessitate the explicitly tribal force. This being said, should the ideas of nationalism gain currency in Saudi society, that being should an ideational shift change military thinking about its relationship to the Saudi citizenry, there could lurk in it a distinctive threat to the regime.
Chapter IV. The Jordanian Arab Army

The Hashemites, Jordan and the Military

Jordan was, and indeed continues to be, an artifice. Its creation, occasioned by the end of the Ottoman Empire, was the consolation prize for the Hashemites and their frustrated designs on an Arab Kingdom. It was established by the British as the Emirate of Trans-Jordan in what was essentially thinly populated desert, with population centers clustered on the East Bank of the Jordan. From the time of Jordan’s founding in 1921, the emir, Prince Abdullah (King in 1946), understood Transjordan not as a country in itself, but essentially a jumping off point for realizing his expansionist visions. Syria, for Abdullah, was the prize. Such were inauspicious beginnings for the formulation of nationalist identity, and indeed ironic, given the Hashemites role in cultivating Arab nationalism in the conduct of the Arab Revolt. With the help of the British, Abdullah undertook to consolidate his domain and bring to heel the Bedouin and peripheral tribes of the emirate.

Meanwhile, pre-independence, the creation of state and political institutions was largely limited to participation by elites and local notables and colored by the British presence. The British would not permit Abdullah’s adventurism to compromise the French holdings in Syria. Hashemite lands to the south, in the Hijaz of the Arabian Peninsula, soon fell in 1924 to the Saudis. With regional ambitions thwarted by British control over foreign affairs, Abdullah’s participation in local politics became highly personal and occasionally he used inter-tribal tensions “to extract concessions from the British,” monetarily or militarily. Such shrewd

exploitation of tribal politics was to be a hallmark of Jordanian monarchial practice.\textsuperscript{58} The character of Jordanian politics was thus set, and the monarchy established as the “supra-tribal” arbiter of politics itself, with no place for other national leaders.\textsuperscript{59} Another important creation of this period was the Arab Legion, later to be the Jordanian Army, which was engendered with a personal loyalty to the monarch and would go on to serve as a foundational element of the Jordanian political philosophy, an alternative to nationalism and a sort of monarchial patriotism.\textsuperscript{60}

The aftermath of the 1948 War with Israel introduced a new and complicating dynamic to the political culture of Jordan, and one that would endure to the present day. Abdullah had managed to emerge from the war with distinct territorial gains in the form of the West Bank, and the effective doubling of his population. Abdullah granted the Palestinians citizenship, a move no other Arab state undertook, and likely an attempt by Abdullah to legitimize his new holdings. Their enfranchisement did not, however, result in complete social and political incorporation. The King often fell back upon his domestic, tribal, base especially in the Army. Participation in the army by Palestinians was, and continues to be tacitly restricted. Its composition is predominantly East-Bankers, a consequence, as we shall see, of the events of 1957 and 1970. In 1952 the Egyptian Free Officers upended the prevailing monarchial order of the Middle East and ushered in a pan-Arab revolution, at once to jettison the legacy of colonialism, and right the wrongs of 1948. Revolutionary republicans would go on to topple monarchies in Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Such sympathies prevailed even in Jordan and the anti-colonial sentiment led the new King, Hussein, to dismiss the British officers in command of the army. Much of Hussein’s

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
political posturing during the early part of his reign was oriented around demonstrating those pan-Arab credentials which the continuation of monarchy was understood to make suspect. Republic was seen as the way of the future in the Arab World and in the aftermath of the 1948 War, Jordan played host to many enthusiastic sympathizers. In April of 1957 Hussein, thwarted the designs of his liberal government (though the exact nature of the business is contested) and subsequently purged the army of Palestinian and Nasserist dissidents. This effectively left Hussein with “a Bedouin-dominated praetorian force,” and the budding of alternative “national leaders” was effectively stamped out.61

Following Jordanian loss of the West Bank in the 1967 War the demographic troubles facing the regime only redoubled. Civil war is at once a hyper-national and factional exercise, especially as it was acted out in Jordan. The threat posed to the Hashemite regime was essentially that of a burgeoning Palestinian national consciousness, representing fully half of his people, using Jordan as the base for a guerilla campaign. The tensions inherent in harboring such open distain for the rule of the King (even to the extent where Palestinian leaders called for the overthrow of the Hashemites) were untenable. The position the PLO took was fundamentally at odds with that of the King. That it, the PLO was the representative of the Palestinian people, stood starkly against not only Hashemite claims to the West Bank, but also claims on the loyalty of its Palestinian population in Jordan proper. Attacks on the king’s person in 1970 ended a period of accommodation and brought down upon the guerillas the state’s repressive apparatus, in events that came to be known as Black September. The crackdown by the regime was thoroughly effective in driving the guerillas out, though not without peril to the regime. The consequences of the civil war for Jordanian identity, however, are mixed. Among the

Transjordanians the immediate result seemed to be a surge in “national” sentiment, however the degree to which that nationalism was anything more than a reaction against Palestinian identity is unsure.62 63

**The Jordanian Arab Army**

As with the Saudi monarchy, the armed forces in Jordan were created to serve the Hashemites and not the “nation” of Jordan. Unlike Saudi Arabia, where we see the hand of the monarchy permeating throughout the military command structure, the subordination of the Jordanian Army is not so explicit. Indeed, it is more appropriate to understand the monarchy and the army as equal partners in Jordanian society, mutually dependent on the continued survival of the other. They are vested in structural realities which informed the creation of both institutions, namely tribalism and monarchial politics, and the absence of a fully formed national ethos. These conditions mirror those in Saudi Arabia and indeed the Jordanian Arab Army would seem an echo of the SANG, were it not for the nature of Saudi politics which emphases balancing within the family.

The structural realities of Jordanian society have conditioned their civil-military relations in the following ways. First, the creation of the state, the monarchy and the army at the same time under the tutelage of the British mandate meant that the emir Abdullah was able to organize Jordanian society around the twin pillars of monarchy and Legion. The Arab Legion, drawing upon East Bank tribes for whom the paternalism of monarchy was a unifying instrument, was used to consolidate the territorial holdings of the emirate while close British control curtailed

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63 Al Oudat and Alshboul, “Jordan First,” 76.
ambitions beyond this. The monarchy and military thus grew together, with the monarch having a close ideological association with the military which has overcome several crises. The early use of tribal politics in the military was to be especially consequential following the events of 1948. Second, and alongside this reality is the artificial nature of Jordan itself. When the state institutions and the army were created there was nothing by way of nationalism in the country. The army was initially devoid of national sentiment but was instead rooted in a loyalty to the “monarch-commander.” Such a tradition of loyalty to the person of the monarch has continued to this day, with every son of Hussein participating in the military, and Abdullah II himself appearing often in uniform, and conducting operations with the troops. Further, this close personal loyalty, coupled with the absence of other national leaders, permitted the monarchy to construct a “continuous narrative in which the army and court are one.” Third, the acquisition of the West Bank and the demographic challenges this presented created at once the conditions for a potential coup, and a reactionary bent in the East Bank soldiery. This positioned the monarchy in such a way as to make it integral to the preservation of East Bankers particular privileges. The robust character of Palestinian nationalism precipitated a reactionary strain of “nationalism” among the East Bank Jordanians, thin gruel on which to feed a popular consciousness, and not the stuff to build a nation out of when the character of the citizenry is so split. Fourth, the politics of tribalism and monarchy, anathema to nationalism, were ill equipped to embrace the revolutionary Arab-nationalism imported from Egypt. Nasserism, ideologically, represented the erasure of those avenues of political participation upon which Jordanian society relied, much as it did for the SANG.

64 Ibid, 69.
65 Gaub, Guardians of the Arab State, 144.
Further, the civil-military arrangements of Jordan reflect the Hashemites embrace of conscious coup-proofing measures the, particularly at points of crisis. The military, however, retains the capability to overthrow the regime, or intervene meaningfully in politics. There is no major force to balance against it, and it is often regarded as one of the more professional and capable forces in the region. As such, when considering of the political quiescence of the Jordanian Army, major explanatory power lies with the ideas of legitimacy from which the soldiery operates.

**Intro-Strategic Situation**

The armed forces of Jordan, in their colonial origins, were organized around the consolidation of the mandate territory. This need to make something out of nothing, that is, to make a functioning polity out of a colonial artifice, makes explicable much of Jordanian history of which the military forms an integral part. The function of the military has been as a tool of the Hashemite Monarchy, that institution for which Jordan was created. Initially, the major threat environment for the emirate was its shared border with the Saudis to the south, and their fanatical Ikhwan raiders. After the Ikhwan revolt and the consolidation of Saudi rule, this threat abated. The 1948 changed the security outlook of the state, and the military was organized around answering punitive raids carried out by the Israelis and resisting invasion from its Northern and Eastern neighbors. Peace with Israel in 1994 was a reflection of the strategic cooperation which had prevailed between them for some time. Despite a distinct qualitative advantage in the Jordanian Armed Forces, it seems unlikely that it could repel a concerted invasion by any of its neighbors (with the possible exception of Saudi Arabia). In this regard, a strategic partner will always be a feature of Jordanian defensive policy. Regional instability,
however, has rendered two of its erstwhile threatening neighbors relatively impotent. As such, Jordan enjoys a relatively secure strategic outlook, for the near future.

**History**

The Jordanian military was initially little more than a frontier police force. The British protectorate, hewn haphazardly from the surrounding desert, wanted for explicit definition of its territorial and administrative extent. As such East Bankers were recruited and placed under the command of British officers, headed by John Baggot Glubb, also known as Glubb Pasha, in the nascent Arab Legion. In the aftermath of the 1948 War, the Hashemites found themselves in possession of the West Bank of the Jordan, and a practically doubled population. The Army expanded substantially as a result. Between 1941 to 1955, the armed forces grew from 1,300 to 25,000. Such a massive increase could not be possible with only the available manpower reserves of the East Bank. The influx of politically unreliable Palestinians, coupled with the rise of Nasserist and pan-Arabist ideology was an acute threat to the stability of the regime, and the Hashemite rule doubled down on its partnership with the East Bank tribal elite in the aftermath of 1957/58. The operations of the *fedayeen* throughout the 1960s catalyzed Israeli retaliation. One such instance, the Battle of Karameh, stands as a point of pride in the national mythologies of both the Palestinians and Jordanians, and marks a high point of strategic cooperation. Thereafter was only discord. The events of 1970 mark the longest lasting deployment of Jordanian troops in a combat capacity and will be thoroughly examined below. The Jordanian Army continues its security cooperation with the United States and has been active in both UN

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67 Gaub, *Guardians of the Arab State*
Peacekeeping Missions and its air force has recently participated in adventures in Yemen and Syria in cooperation with regional partners.

**Relationship to Foreign Powers**

The Jordanian Army, similar to Saudi Arabia, has a long standing relationship with the UK and the United States. It was the UK that created the Arab Legion and staffed it with its leading officers during the first half of its existence. This became a source of some stress in the post-colonial era and the break with the UK became a means for Hussein to appease dissident officers. This being said, the relationship with the UK early on gave the Jordanian army valuable experience and training, and it acquitted itself better than any Arab force in the 1948 and 1967 Wars. The relationship with the United States, shaped initially by the Eisenhower Doctrine, has been similarly useful in modernizing the armed forces and protecting the regime at times of great strife (such as the 1970 war). It has been marked by periods of some tumult, such as followed the Hashemite refusal to join the coalition against Saddam in 1990/91, though the peace with Israel in 1994 repaired the slight. Another feature of Jordanian relations which needs considering is the stationing of Arab troops from both Iraq and Saudi Arabia at various times in its early history. Nominally these troops were to serve against Israel, should war erupt, however the reality of their proximity was such that they shaped the calculus of the regime and its opponents, especially in the events under consideration.

**Current Force Posture/Deployment/Organization**

Kings of Jordan

Current: Abdullah II (1999-present)
Hussein (1952-1999)

Talal (1951-1952)

Abdullah I (1921-1951)

The Jordanian prime minister has been traditionally the Minister of Defense, though *de facto*, the King is by far the more powerful actor with regard to the Army. He exerts direct and regular control over the military apparatus and is key in the approval of appointments to important posts in the command structure.\(^6^8\) The force sizing of the Jordanian army hovers around 88,000 active regulars. Their deployment (in four commands: Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central, a strategic reserve and a special operations command) is primarily biased toward the population centers in the West of the country.\(^6^9\) It’s deployment in these four cardinal locations suggests a preparedness to conduct holding actions against any one of its larger neighbors, until such time as some larger force can come to its rescue. This deployment is not suggestive of any offensive inclination, neither is it likely that Jordan harbors an expansionist designs. The army does have a healthy complement of mechanized and armored brigades and has demonstrated in the 1970 that it is capable of combined arms maneuvers against armored formations. The Airforce is the second largest contingent of the Jordanian defensive establishment at 12,000 (the navy lurks off Aqaba with a force of just 500).\(^7^0\) It has seen combat recently over Syria against ISIS and has sent some small detachment to aid the GCC coalition in Yemen.

\(^6^8\) Gaub, *Guardians of the Arab State*, 145.


\(^7^0\) Ibid.
Coup-Proofing

The Hashemites consistently faced an internal and external military challenge to their sovereignty. For one its strategic situation, “between Iraq and a hard place,” necessitated a robust defensive apparatus. Meanwhile, the demographic and political challenges posed by the Palestinians and Nasserists meant that a capable force could undo the monarchy. As such, a number of measures were implemented. 1) Ethnic stacking has been employed to overcome the demographic problem. The Jordanian Army, a jointly volunteer and conscript force, has unspoken restrictions on the ranks that Palestinian members can reach. Though constituting upwards of 50 percent of the population, Palestinians can rank no higher than colonel in a combat unit, nor general in a support unit.71 Furthermore, the Bedouin tribes are considered the most politically reliable of all the East Bankers, and they are stacked throughout the major combat regiments. 2) At points of crisis, the regime can draw upon tribal levies and overlapping intelligence services to check possible disloyalty in the armed forces. This was done during both incidences under consideration, though to its greatest extent in the 1970 civil war. 3) The reliance on the United States and the UK for assistance in crises has permitted the regime room to maneuver against internal threats, despite the fact that on several occasions foreign troops operated in Jordan and threatened the survival of the state itself.

Conclusion

In demonstrating the role of the monarchy and the military have played in shaping Jordanian politics we will look to two events of great significance in Jordan’s history. The first is the Arabization of the army and the political/military maneuvers of April 1957 which flew

withal. Therein we will find that the forces of Nasserism were ultimately incompatible with the prerogatives of monarchy and the tribal military and that, when pressed to it, the army was ultimately the King’s. The next circumstance of note is the 1970/71 Civil War the clarification it lent to Jordanian society. The threat posed by the fedayeen and its state within a state was unpalatable to the monarchy and military establishment and the behavior of both suggests a joint stake in the others survival.

1956-1957 Arabizing the Army and the Incident at Al-Zarqa

Upon assuming the throne in a revolutionary climate, King Hussein was as eager to assert his authority over the armed forces as he was to demonstrate his Arab credentials. Arabizing the officer corps and shedding Glubb as Chief of Staff was the obvious choice for such an ambition. Such a move would doubtless ruffle the British, however the climate was certainly ripe. The world was in the grips of an anti-colonial fervor, and British pressure on Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact was ill met in the country itself. There were yet profound sympathies with Arab independence from the West, especially as embodied by Nasser’s Egypt. Certain stylings of his early reign portray Hussein as somewhat naïve, not apprehending the threat that Nasser’s revolution posed to monarchy itself, and Hussein’s regime in particular. As such he was quick to congratulate Nasser for his various successes and similarly quick to embrace the Free Officers elements in his own country. The Free Officers within the Arab Legion were enthusiastic about the Arabization of the army, seeing it as putting Jordan on the path to potential union with Egypt, or at least furtherance of a Nasserist agenda therein. Glubb and the British officers were dismissed in March of 1956 and commanded to leave the country with all speed. It was a political victory for Hussein, who, by such a maneuver seemed to join the ranks of the modernizing Arab World, throwing off the yoke of imperialism and embracing Arab rule. So too
was it a victory for the Free Officers who took on greater leadership roles in the absence of the British officers.\textsuperscript{72} This put them at odds with much of the army proper, who viewed the rise of the nationalists with no slight contempt. Ali Abu Nuwar, himself not yet thirty though close in counsel to the king, was eventually made Chief of Staff of the Army in May of 1956. The liberal voices of Jordanian politics too, reaped the fruits of Glubb’s dismissal. The king called for new elections, hoping as he was to ride the wave of popularity from the Arabization of the army to electoral victory. They were to be the freest elections in Jordan’s history and yielded a government of broadly Arab nationalist bent.\textsuperscript{73} It was the contest between this government and the King, backed by conservative elements of Jordanian East Bank society, which was to lead to confrontation in April of 1957.

After dismissing Glubb and “Arabizing” the army the Hashemites faced a shifting security environment. They had not abandoned the British and the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, but the opposition to both the Baghdad Pact and the continued support of the British was pronounced. The threat from Israel persisted and it continued to conduct its retaliatory raids across the frontier. In this regard Jordan hoped it could count on British guarantees of security in the event of an invasion proper (though in the aftermath of the Suez debacle in 1956 it is questionable whether the British would have budged to save Jordan). It was at this time, however, that the United States began to deepen its involvement in the Arab states. The Eisenhower Doctrine, articulated in January of 1957, was looked on with a similar skepticism as the Baghdad Pact, though predominantly within liberal quarters in government. The King himself had become quite conscious of the acute threat Nasserism and its communist backing

\textsuperscript{72} Nigel Ashton, \textit{King Hussein: A Political Life} (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008) 54.
held for the kingdom, and as such was more receptive to overtures from the Americans. After the elections of October 1956 (just before the Suez War) the government was increasingly peopled by individuals sympathetic with pan-Arab and Nasserist causes. The leading National Socialist Party, headed by Suleiman Nabulsi (PM from October 1956-March 1957), sought to strengthen ties with the Soviet Union and the Arab world as led by Nasser. Such efforts constituted a direct threat to the Hashemites, for the Soviets were notoriously hostile to monarchy. Tensions between the Nabulsi government and Hussein came to a head over these disagreements and personnel considerations in the government. On April 7th, Nabulsi presented Hussein with a list of individuals for dismissal or retirement from government, one of which was a pro-royalist director of public-security. The Directorate of Public Security was the police force formed in the aftermath of Glubb’s dismissal. Before such time, policing was carried out by the Arab Legion. Such suggested that Nabulsi was attempting to consolidate power among the armed factions, moving politics in the direction of a coup. Hussein reluctantly agreed with this measure, as well as the establishment of relations with the USSR. However, on the 10th of April when another list of royalists was presented, Nabulsi was summarily dismissed from government.74

    Diplomatic cables from both the British and Americans suggest rumblings that something was afoot.75 That “something,” once it well and truly materialized, remains unclear even today. Prior to the dismissal of Nabulsi, on April 8th, a curious maneuver was undertaken by elements of the military. It was codenamed Operation Hashim and the substance of it, though not entirely sure, was that a regiment of East Bank tribesmen deployed around Amman and stopped vehicles

entering and leaving. The purpose of such an exercise is not immediately clear. Hussein was able to order the troops back to the barracks, but their deployment was enough to indicate that a coup might be in the offing. The military, that bastion of royalist support, was not firmly in Hussein’s control. Surely, if he were to retain his prerogative, the army must be brought to heel and its Nasserist agitators purged. American diplomats found that Ali Abu Nuwar, the Chief of Staff after Glubb, was widely rumored to be in support of the Nabulsi government and it was he, who by the royalist account, initiated the coup. On April 13th, Nuwar’s cousin, Lieutenant Colonel Ma’an, order a contingent of Bedouin troops to conduct an exercise in the desert without ammunition. The camp at Al-Zarqa (at the time the largest garrison in the Jordanian army) experienced trouble of a sort and reports of rioting reached the King ears. It is said that he personally drove out to the camp and discovered it in terrible confusion. Brief firefights had erupted, and loyalist officers had made arrests of certain officers under suspicion. While many sources are in disagreement, there does appear to be general agreement that on finding this situation Hussein threw himself into the teeming throng of men to show himself still alive and asked the allegiance of the soldiery. All accounts suggest it was heartily given.

What is most in dispute seems to be who had initiated the coup, whether Ali Abu Nuwar (Free Officer and Chief of Staff), the King himself, or conservative elements in the military hierarchy who wished to spur the king to action. There is a case to be made for each, though, certain correspondence between the King and the Americans in the build-up would suggest that this was a royalist “preemptive coup.” Indeed, so terrifically bungled was the affair (should it

76 Tal, Politics, The Military and National Security, 44.
78 Tal, Politics, The Military and National Security, 44.
have been Free Officer incited) that it must have either been the case that Bedouin units would not be moved by talk of coups (and hence the fighting erupted), or the officers had completely underestimated the speed with which Hussein would respond to seditious rumblings. Regardless, the outcome was the same. The tribal/Bedouin levies were placed at the King’s disposal and the common soldiery appeared overwhelmingly to support King Hussein and was willing to act in the aftermath to suppress anti-monarchial agitation.\textsuperscript{80} Abu Nuwar, who fled to Syria after the events at Al-Zarqa and was replaced as Chief of Staff by another Free Officer, Ali Al-Hayari who himself promptly fled to Syria after three days in the post. His successor was a stalwart royalist of the old guard, Habis Al-Majali. His tenure as Chief of Staff, though interrupted by Egyptian control of the army in 1967, would see his participation in the operations against the fedayeen in 1970. Martial law was enacted after opposition groups convened an assembly which was vocally opposed to the dissolution of Nabulsi’s government. However, lacking as they did any sympathizers in the army, and given the strong backing many of the tribal leaders had given him during the crisis, there was little to be done when all political parties were banned, and the army’s role strengthened.\textsuperscript{81} With a new, loyalist government formed the state of over confusion and crisis abated by the end of April. Foreign intervention (that being from Syria or Egypt, was successfully avoided through cooperation with the United States which positioned the Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean off Beirut in support of Hussein’s internal maneuvers.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{81} Ashton, \textit{King Hussein: A Political Life}, 66.
Analysis

Regional

These events should be placed firmly in the context of a region in the throes of decolonization, the waning of British influence, and the rising currency of leftist/communist affiliated sympathies. In this environment overt support for Hashemite Jordan was not forthcoming. The British could do little to prevent the Israeli’s retaliatory strikes over the frontier, and increasingly regarded the preservation of Jordan’s integrity as a needless expense. So too did many of the liberal elements within Jordan seek to shed the colonial trappings which came with continued support from the British. While this disposition, embodied by Nabulsi, sought instead to align with Arab patrons and embark on relations with the Soviets, Hussein became disposed to consider the possible advantages of aligning with Washington. Hussein was purportedly enamored with Eisenhower personally, and “was clearly impressed by the evenhandedness of President Eisenhower’s leadership during the Suez Crisis.” In seeking to gain Washington’s support after the dismantling of British influence, Hussein was compelled to take a strong anti-leftist/communist stance, one which clashed with the government. These considerations set the stage for the internal domestic power struggle between Hussein and the liberal factions of his government.

Domestic Political/Structural

The developments on the domestic front centered squarely on the removal of British influence. Arabization of the army presented to the King both a danger and an opportunity. The

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84 Robins, A History of Jordan, 98.
danger lay in the likelihood pro-Nasserist elements would fill the gaps of leadership which opened up with the British withdrawal. The opportunity was to exert greater leverage in the domestic and regional environment. The nearness of the King to the armed forces, a product of the Jordanian civil-military arrangements, permitted him to perceive the disaffection of his officers. This, coupled with his direct control over the appointment of officers, gave him an advantage over his civilian government. He was able to style himself as the liberator of Jordan from the colonial yoke and thus did not surrender that mantle to Free Officers. Nabulsi and his government saw the need to exert control over the security forces but had greater ground to cover in reorganizing the loyalties of the military. As events in April of 1957 would prove, they were outmaneuvered by the King in this regard. The elections of October of 1956 presented a complicating factor for Hussein as results did not return a government very much in favor of a conservative monarchy. While the King played democracy for a few months, the incompatibility of the government’s agenda with the royal prerogative was reconcilable only by force. These fault lines were detected within the diplomatic services of both the US and Britain, all of which picked up on the decisiveness of military control. Hussein’s ultimate decision to enforce Martial Law in the aftermath of the April 13th incident suggests that the die was cast in an alliance between monarchy and the Bedouin elements of the military. This is further reinforced by the mobilization of tribal irregulars which accompanied the crisis after Al-Zarqa. These irregulars were representative of that section of society which was ill disposed to the modernizing bent of the Free Officers. The Bedouin’s loyalty to the monarchy has been much remarked upon and Bedouin contingents had been spread out throughout the army and represent the regime’s
ethnic/ideological stacking.\textsuperscript{85} The conservative impulses of both monarchy and tribes coalesced around opposition to the modernizing government and its nationalist sympathies.

**Organizational**

At the organizational level the Arabization of the army created rifts within the officer corps that made a confrontation inevitable. The old guard, embodied by officers who rose in the ranks under Abdullah I, were resentful of the rise of the Free Officers, especially Abu Nuwar, and threatened by their nationalist bent. This resentful disposition played into the hands of the King. Ali Abu Nuwar and the Free Officers may well have been the fall men for a maneuver which was directed generally against the government. \textit{In order for the King to successfully reclaim his prerogatives he needed full control over the security services which could only be had by purging it of the younger Free Officers whose associations with Egypt and Syria made their loyalties suspect.} They evidently did not have the backing of the strongest elements of the military which seemed quick to side with the King once a confrontation was in the offing. The maneuvers undertaken on April 8\textsuperscript{th}, however, the so-called Operation Hashim, seem to suggest that Hussein was not in full possession of the military apparatus. That the units mobilized were East Bankers in the military, deployed in a role seemingly benign (simply taking a census of cars entering and leaving) could suggest that this was to be the means of distracting the loyalist elements while different units enacted a coup. This would be supported by Ma’an Nuwar’s orders for a desert exercise with no ammunition. These sorts of efforts fit with the tactics advocated by Luttwak, of which control or distraction of loyalist forces form a key component.\textsuperscript{86} This being said, why coup plotters would so clumsily arouse suspicions through

\textsuperscript{85} Gaub, \textit{Guardians of the Arab State}, 139.
\textsuperscript{86} Luttwak, \textit{Coup D’état}, 155.
such maneuvers without taking immediate action is hard to explain. The seeming ease with which Hussein sent the troops to the barracks suggest that they themselves were not in the know as to what was proceeding. There is some speculation that these maneuvers were false flag operations by the royalist elements, designed to deliberately provoke reprisals by the king. These theories complicate an already complex environment. It is perhaps more likely that something was afoot, and the Free Officers set out to test the degree to which they could circumvent Hussein’s control of the military. His close personal watch over them indicates that he remained very much in control. Furthermore, as the crisis left Al-Zarqa and entered the streets of Amman with Hussein’s declaration of Martial Law, we see the mobilization of the Bedouin irregulars, a balancing instrument favoring the Hashemites. These units saw themselves as more the personal servants of the King, and less an instrument of national modernization. As such, there was considerable zeal and enthusiasm in these units for their charge of protecting the royal household and policing the streets of Amman. To the mind of the loyalists, ultimate political authority lay with the King.

**Personal**

Central in all these proceedings is Hussein himself. It may indeed have been the case, and much of the evidence bears this out, that he encountered Nasserism and its adherents with a naïve enthusiasm. His willingness to ally himself with the Free Officers (particularly Abu Nuwar) was likely necessary in achieving the Arabization of the army, a goal central to both of their philosophies. He was likely heartened by the rhetoric which surrounded Arab nationalism and at first drew from it no sense of the danger it posed. At the encroachments of the Nabulsi government and the agitating by Syrian and Egyptian propagandists, he was soon disabused of
these notions and proceeded to act with a determination to preserve the monarchy and its strength. For a time, it seemed that the only capable ministers to be drawn upon in government were of Nabulsi’s disposition; neither a committed royalist nor an explicit Egyptian stooge.

There is much to suggest that that though the liberals and their fellow travelers in the Free Officers intended to reorganize Jordanian society along Egyptian lines, it would not necessarily entail the end of the Hashemites per se. This disposition lent itself to indecisive action. If there was to be an effort to check the monarchy, even short of a coup, it would have taken more resolute maneuvering than was accomplished by either Nuwar or Nabulsi. The King, and the emotions his physical person evoked in the army, was the more decisive actor. If coups are about making a fact, as Naunihal Singh suggests, the incident at Al-Zarqa demonstrates that Hussein had grasped this reality. The confusion at the camp, revolving around the fate of the King, made his appearance a mortal blow to conspiracy. It gave him the pretext necessary to move against the Free Officers, regardless of their guilt, as the emotions cultivated in his relationship with the Bedouin soldiery made what may have been the figment of his control a reality. The soldiery and the tribes were then perfectly willing to mobilize in the streets to help abandon the flirtation with democracy which precipitated this crisis.

Conclusion

Though many of the disagreements between Hussein and the 1956/7 Parliament centered on its international relationships, the most crucial for both was on who was to control the “ultimate veto power in domestic politics.”87 The army, and control thereof, was that one prerogative which the king would not countenance the erosion of. In April of 1957, when the

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87 Tal, Politics, the Military and National Security, 99.
army seemed to be slipping his grasp, as exemplified by the nocturnal maneuvering in Operation Hashim, a critical moment was reached, and a test of loyalties was demanded of the army. That they did not falter in their support for the King is owed in particular to both the revulsion within the old guard of Bedouin officers and soldiers for the Arab nationalist bent of the Free Officers, and the personal actions of the monarch. At a moment of crisis and violence, to show himself before the soldiery as alive and very much king was to play off the innate martial respect for personal bravery. The King’s efforts, likely a preemptive coup, were directed more against the government than they were against the army itself. The bulk of the army was still loyal to the monarchy and the Free Officers were quick to scatter in the aftermath of the business, indicative of the general lack of support they could expect in the face of such forceful maneuvers by the King. In the end, revolution was either aborted at Al-Zarqa, or never forthcoming. Hussein was able to fall back upon a security apparatus that continued to be populated, at least in the rank and file, by zealous supporters of monarchy. Further, he still retained an East Bank elite which was willing to fill the gaps left by the ouster of the Free Officers. The incident at Al-Zarqa was pivotal in the civil-military relations of Jordan. Where others were quickly falling to the allure of Nasserism, monarchy under Hussein, with its deep involvement in the military, secured its power before such power was lost to the government and its composition irrevocably altered. The outpouring of support from Bedouin irregulars and the tribal groups generally is clear evidence that the sympathies within Jordan’s armed camps still lay with the monarchy, in which was embodied the conservative bent of the East Bank interests. The constitution of the Jordanian Army, created out of the tribes which occupied the Mandate territories and inherited by Hussein, was too much to be overcome by the liberalizing/nationalizing efforts of Nabulsi’s government.
Civil War, Black September 1970/1

The fear that the military might develop an independent bent did not necessarily abate after 1957, and neither did Jordan’s continued participation in pan-Arab politics. This pan-Arabism and its concurrent politicization of the military lent itself to destructive strategic choices on the part of Hussein. When the 1967 War erupted, Hussein was left with a confounding dilemma. If he were to remain aloof, at the appeal of the Israelis, such a move would likely demonstrate his lack of solidarity with fellow Arabs, reigniting fears of mobilization from within. He was, however rightly convinced that militarily he could not emerge victorious. His choice to eventually intervene highlights the degree to which praetorianism still weighed heavily on Hussein, enough to influence his strategic calculus. In aligning with Egypt, he surrendered control of his military to Egyptian command which, arriving on June 1, four days before the war, attempted to restructure Jordanian operational planning to make allowances for offensive measures. Too little too late, to be sure. It is a testament to Jordanian fighting ability, that in the conduct of the campaign in the West Bank, they had inflicted the greatest number of casualties on the Israelis. The matter of the 1967 War demonstrates that the strategic goals of Jordan did not align with the calculus of regime security. The loss of the West Bank was, perhaps, the price of keeping his throne. The consequences of that loss for Jordan, the Palestinians and the Hashemite throne were to be realized in civil war three years later.

Despite the retreat from the West Bank, the Jordanian army had not the same reputation for unprofessionalism as its neighbors. It did not disintegrate as did Egypt’s army, and therefore did not provide an opening for radical elements in Jordanian society to attempt to restructure it. Indeed, there were occasions after the war where it acquitted itself quite well, while

88 Ibid, 124.
simultaneously highlighting divisions at the heart of Jordanian society. At the Battle of Karamah in 1968, the Jordanian military effectively repelled Israeli advances against the fedayeen, or Palestinian guerillas.\textsuperscript{89} The battle saw elements of the Jordanian regular army fighting alongside the guerillas themselves. In the national consciousness of both Jordanian and Palestinian society, the Karamah incident was the source of much myth-making. A major, substantive victory against Israeli forces in the field, Karamah marked a point of pride which both Jordanian and Palestinian sources claim for themselves.\textsuperscript{90} Cooperation with those guerillas was not to be long lasting, and within two years their threat to the monarchy became intolerable. Operating for a time in forward positions in the Jordan Valley, Israeli sallies eventually drove the fedayeen into the cities proper. It was there that they set up their famed state within a state. Such a styling is no exaggeration.

Yazid Sayigh notes that the Palestinian organizations operating in Jordan had developed a judicial system and military police, indeed all the trappings of government.\textsuperscript{91} The fedayeen, especially the PLO, enjoyed great sympathies in Jordanian government and military, something unavoidable given the extent of Palestinian representation in Jordan (approximately two thirds of the population after 1967). Hussein was cognizant of and took steps to counter this potential influence. Beginning in 1969 two groups were set up within the security establishment; one designed to reinforce the ideological component of the Hashemite government (the Mobilization and Moral Guidance Branch), and the other to serve as an intelligence and monitoring service (the Special Branch).\textsuperscript{92} These services were drawn from regime loyalists and charged with

\textsuperscript{89} Nigel Ashton, “Pulling the Strings: King Hussein’s Role During the Crisis of 1970 in Jordan,” \textit{The International History Review}, \textit{Vol 28, No. 2.} 99.


\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, 245.
setting up programs designed to reinforce loyalties to the Hashemites and the monarchy and counter the revolutionary messaging of the fedayeen.

The Special Branch begs for particular mention. Aside from the intelligence efforts (designed to be parallel to the regular military intelligence), it set up certain militia groups within Jordanian society whose allegiance to the monarchy would be less suspect than the regular soldiery (which was heavily peopled with Palestinians). East Bankers were the base of these recruitment efforts which were especially careful to stress “the conservative values of rural and clan-based society.”93 The first half of 1970 was the most desperate time for Hashemite government, where the Palestinian groups enjoyed the freest range and Hussein was under the greatest external pressures. Such was their popular support that attempts to curtail the fedayeen’s swaggering disregard for the King were met with demonstrations and public rebuke.94 The rhetoric emerging from the Palestinian guerillas increasingly subverted the Hashemite rule in Jordan, with certain groups (the PFLP in particular) calling for an end to the monarchy, which was viewed as antithetical to Palestinian national movements. These organizations ruled the streets of Amman, ignoring the police and army alike. Clashes between them and the government were frequent, though Hussein’s capacity to retaliate was limited by the 17,000 Iraqi troops stationed in the East, and the prevailing regional opinion that the fedayeen should not be harmed. Their very presence in the cities constituted a flagrant indifference for the authority of the king.

September of 1970 brought the trial of strength, long awaited. While clashes violent and frequent had characterized most of the year, September presented a Rubicon moment for the Hashemites and their allies. The King’s convoy came under fire outside of Amman on the first. In the days that followed, loyal Bedouin units proceeded with some limited efforts against the

93 Ibid.
94 Ashton, “Pulling the Strings,” 100.
fedayeen and driving further escalation in the form of the famed Dawson’s field hijackings (outside the military base at Al-Zarqa). A new, military, government was organized on the 16th of September, with the Brigadier Mohammad Daoud, a man of Palestinian extraction, made Prime Minister. This was, by some counts, not an attempt at appeasement but simply a ruse. The PM, while ostensibly part of the military government set up, was effectively powerless. The new government had been preceded by the continuous cultivation of East Bank loyalties, culminating in a war-council of former ministers and army/intelligence officers who supervised the planning of Hussein’s campaign. Wasif al-Tal, a hardline East Bank politician was among this special council. Habis Majali, who had been made Chief of Staff of the Army after Abu Nuwar was dismissed, was recalled from retirement to assume the post again. On the 17th the King moved against the guerillas.

The initial fighting was concentrated in and around Amman with the intention of rooting out the guerillas from the capital before proceeding to the north. The Palestinians had announced certain cities to be “liberated,” including Irbid, however made little by way of offensive maneuvers. The Iraqis at Al-Zarqa didn’t budge despite the fears of the King. It was instead the Syrians who intervened. An armored column crossed the frontier on the 20th only to be pushed out on the 23rd with heavy losses. Machinations in Washington and Tel Aviv resulted in the deployment of the Sixth Fleet to Eastern Mediterranean and a fear of Israeli intervention that was threatening enough that the Syrian air force would not risk its MiGs to save the army. Hussein’s PM, Daoud, had resigned on a visit to Cairo designed to draw off Arab hostility. On the 26th Hussein himself went to Cairo and concluded a ceasefire agreement with Arafat.

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95 Fruchter-Rouen, “Black September,” 250.
96 Sayigh, Armed Struggle, 259.
following day. At the end of October 1970, Wasif al-Tal was appointed Prime Minister and it was under his tenure that fighting continued on and off until July of 1971. By such a time the 
*fedayeen* could levy no effective resistance and were driven into Lebanon. His premiership was quite powerful indeed, a heavy contrast to that of his Palestinian predecessors. For his efforts, the PLO assassinated al-Tal in November of 1971.

Losses for the Jordanian army were light in comparison to the Palestinian and Syrian loses. Defection, however, siphoned a great deal of manpower away from the army. Estimates vary, though several accounts suggest defection was responsible for carrying away between 5000-7000 Jordanian-Palestinian troops (in the time from September to October) including division and brigade commanders.\(^98\) What is remarkable is that, given such a rate of defection the army remained intact and was able to carry out operations. Surely this is a testament to the success of the ethnic-stacking of the Jordanian army, especially among elite combat troops. The army, demonstrably, had a stake in Hashemite success in the civil war.

**Analysis**

**Regional**

The professed support of neighboring Arab governments for the Palestinian cause checked Hussein’s hand over the course of 1969/70. As his authority crumbled around him, he could not meaningfully repress the guerillas for fear that invasion would eventually unseat him, despite the loyalties of his army. His relationship to the United States, however, saved the government. The surrounding Arab counties, despite being uncomfortable with the prospect of

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the guerillas being crushed, were even less inclined to hazard their own troops against American or Israeli fighters. Iraqi troops in country seriously colored the calculus of the regime throughout the entire crisis of 1970, however they had been ordered not to intervene for fear of US airstrikes.99 Meanwhile the divisions at the heart of Syrian government, while driving intervention by the army, crucially denied it the air support it need to wage an effective campaign. When he came to power in a coup in November of 1970, Assad looked less favorably on the Palestinian guerillas and was more concerned with consolidating his own power in government after the failed intervention of September 20th. We cannot ignore them role that Washington played in securing the breathing space for the Jordanian army to operate effectively against the guerillas. This being said, without a certain disposition within the army in favor of the Hashemites, US efforts would have been fruitless.

**Domestic Political/Structural**

The defeat of 1967 and the loss of the West Bank presented the Hashemite regime with a territorial and demographic problem. Whereas before it was possible, given explicit Jordanian control over the West Bank, to rely upon the support of local elites therein to bolster the monarchy, the loss weakened Hashemite claims to government over the Palestinian people. What developed were two competing nationalism with different interpretations of what the people and territory of “Jordan” represented. The Palestinians sought an accommodating base of operations for their war against Israel, a place to assert Palestinian nationality and sovereignty, and indeed some saw Jordan as part of the Palestinian right. Jordanians (that is, East Bank/Bedouin elements of Jordan) where clear in so far as they believed Jordan was not part of Palestine but had not

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achieved a national consciousness with similar political ambitions as the Palestinians. Jordanian “nationalism” was less not so much concerned with the idea of a Jordanian people, and instead more concerned with the privilege of association with the monarchy. The monarchy was the symbol of the Jordanian state and the army was the ultimate mechanism for asserting clan based privilege in government, the preservation of which was decidedly under threat by the revolutionary ideology of Palestinian nationalists. As such the “Jordanians” were more united in their distrust of the Palestinians than in a shared identity.

The penetration of *fedayeen* sympathies in Jordanian government and society represented the greatest existential threat to the regime and the socio/political organization of Jordan itself. In this regard Hussein could not hope to trust solely in the traditional loyalties of the army but began implementing measures which are commonly associated with coup-proofing. The Special Branch is the best example of this, a parallel intelligence service designed to monitor the sympathies and efforts of Palestinian groups and their affiliates in the government. As with the crisis of 1957, the Bedouin irregulars were called upon to reinforce the regime. Theirs continued to be an allegiance which was unconcerned with pan-Arabism and nationalism and was therefore best suited to defending the right of the monarchy. The creation of Bedouin militias to support the regime in the September war is representative not only of the material calculus of coup-proofing, but indicative of the monarchy’s intention of making the war decisive in the character and organization of Jordanian society. The division of the country into two armed camps represents “the absence of any uncoerced Jordanian identity inclusive of the Palestinians.”100 The war-council, or “council of Prime Ministers” that was assembled in early September demonstrates that the real center of Jordanian politics was inclusive of the sitting Prime Minister

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100 Fruchter-Rouen, “Black September,” 251.
only when it was convenient. Real power lay with the King and his supporters in the army for such represented Jordanian society as envisioned by monarchy. That PM Daoud resigned within 10 days of achieving the post is further proof that accommodation with the Palestinians was not considered, and that the struggle had become one for the very idea of Jordan.

Organizational

Palestinian identity and the fedayeen were not just a threat to the monarchy, but a threat to the army as well. The army, composed as it was of East Bank levies but heavily peopled with Palestinians, would not have persisted in the same form should the monarchy fall. The Jordanian elite and tribal society would have lost their primary avenue to political power should Jordanian society be reorganized around the Palestinian majority. These material incentives can hide what might be considered a struggle of identity. The Battle at Karameh was to serve as a foundational event in the ideologies of both Palestinian nationalism and the Jordanian army to the deliberate exclusion of the other. Jordanian society, especially the army, was ultimately unaccommodating of the encroachments of an alternative (and powerful) identity. The army is often understood to be the force driving much of Hussein’s decision making in the crisis and had been noted for its impetuosity and fervor.\footnote{Sayigh, Armed Struggle, 265.} The guerillas open disregard for the authority of the security services must have been a grating source of contempt in the army. Further, the Palestinians did themselves few favors by making an enemy of the army through attacks on outposts and patrols. The army was ultimately too technologically and numerically powerful for the fedayeen to meet toe to toe. The availability of armor and aircraft could have only been countered with foreign intervention which was only half-hearted when it came. Further, divides inherent to the
Palestinian national movements made it easier for a campaign to be waged against them as they could not coordinate well their objectives.

The sheer volume of defections, while difficult to accurately apprehend, still suggests that the struggle for hearts and minds was a key component of the crisis. Palestinian dissidents agitated along revolutionary lines while the regime employed its Special Branch to reinforce the ideology of the monarchy. While defection was largely reported to be along ethnic lines (a phenomenon which is predictable and borne out in the civil war in Syria), there were still high ranking officers who chose to side with the Palestinians. Their defection recommends further support to the notion that the war centered on matters of identity and ideology, as much as they did on the material threat to East Bank status. The survival of the army in the face of such defection and civil war is a testament to the strength of ethnic stacking as a regime survival strategy.

**Personal**

While Hussein’s role, as monarch, continued to be central to East Bank society and the army, it was the appointments made to government and the security services which drove the 1970 crisis and its outcomes. In the run-up to the September campaign, his Prime Ministers had been of Palestinian extraction but were effectively powerless. Behind the scenes he relied entirely on East Bankers. Advisors such as Wasif al-Tal (later PM) and Habis Majali (Chief of Staff during the crisis) were to push the hardline, cognizant, no doubt, of the threat a Palestinian revolution in Jordan posed to their privilege. Hussein’s behaviors suggest that for a time he was not committed to the complete eradication of the *fedayeen* and was hoping for some sort of

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accommodation or settlement which he eventually got in late September. Whether this was because Hussein sought not to anger his neighbors or whether it was his own personal convictions about the fedayeen which stayed his hand seems to have been answered by his next steps. Developments in the Arab World such as Nasser’s death on the 27th, Assad’s rise to power and the continued aloofness of the Iraqis may have spurred the resurgence in the campaign and the appointment of Wasif al-Tal to the premiership. With this move accommodation was no longer sought and the advantages lay firmly with the monarchy and its allies.

Conclusion

The domestic opening for intervention which civil war created was essentially unexploitable. The fact remained that the monarchy continued to be the center of gravity in the Jordanian state whose overthrow, especially in a time of such fierce civil strife, would have spelled the end of the state and the privileges of its East Bank citizenry. Even though a crisis might occasion an opportunity to intervene, it does not necessarily follow that the military will seize such openings. The interests of monarchy and military remained mutually reinforcing. Jordan’s statehood along the lines laid out in the mandate made the idea of a Jordanian identity laughably implausible. The monarchy was key in establishing the institutions of state and setting up the avenues of political participation along the tribal lines of the East Bank but was not alone capable of creating an identity which could meaningfully exist independent of pan-Arabism. The acquisition and then loss of the West Bank introduced an element to Jordanian society which was at once necessary for and threatening to the notion of Jordanian identity; Palestinian nationalism.

That power had been already been concentrated in the Bedouin made it so that any reorganization of Jordanian society to include the Palestinian population would be a violent affair. When things came to a head in 1970 the threat from Palestinian nationalism was to both monarchy and army, the twin pillars of Jordanian society. The impulse of the monarchy and army to defend their prerogatives and identity further cemented their allegiance to each other, and ethnic stacking in the army made the prosecution of the campaign possible and ultimately successful. 1970 serves as a clarification to the question of whether the Jordanian army would obey orders to repress in the event of revolution. We might infer from their actions that, if the threat materializes from the Palestinian quarters of society, or at least can be painted as such, that the army would understand itself as invested in a pro-regime outcome. This being said, it has been remarked upon that the events of 1970 represent a shift in the idea of Jordanian identity. The main features of such identity are an emphasis on the tribal, Islamic and Hashemite elements of Jordanian society.\textsuperscript{104} Rather than seeing the abandonment of a tribal ethos when in combat with nationalism, we see the solidification of it. The role of the military in this outcome is indisputable. It is in the monarchy and military that the tribal character of Jordanian society is most pronounced, with each reinforcing the values in the other. The behavior of Jordanian society throughout the crisis suggested that the legitimacy of the monarchy remained enough to overcome the Arab and Muslim duty to the Palestinian cause.

\textsuperscript{104} Fruchter-Rouen, “Black September,” 252.
Chapter V. Conclusion

This work began with the recognition that, in a region which has seen domestic politics heavily militarized, where monarchy had faced a direct challenge to its existence, there yet persisted dynastic systems whose militaries seemed not to be the final arbiter of politics. What has been revealed in this work is that these monarchies and the very states they represent, in approaching the trials of state-building, have done so in tandem with a tribal military structure which was at once very accommodating of, and indeed dependent on, the principles espoused in monarchy. The kinship politics which they embrace lend themselves to a peaceful acquiescence to royal family maneuvering, and a system of monarchial patronage. The tribal militaries which were established by the Hashemites of Jordan and the Saudi’s, grew up with the institution of monarchy itself, and themselves served alongside the monarchy as supra-tribal pillars of the state. While the civil-military arrangements of Jordan and Saudi Arabia appear on the surface quite different, they are the products of similar processes of state-building. Both societies, at the frontier of empire, retained a traditional character that was resistant to the encroachments of nationalism. With nationalism flies the sovereignty of a broader polity than the clan or tribe upon which these states were founded. As such it represented a threat to kinship politics itself, and the special privilege which the tribal loyalists enjoyed in their relationship to the monarchy. Much of this explains how impervious the Saudi National Guard, and the Jordanian Bedouin troops were to the proselytizing of Nasserists and Free Officers. This character was to be foundational to their
early efforts at political unification and centralization and would go on to be codified and institutionalized in their civil-military arrangements.

This is not to gloss over the substantial differences in the political arrangements in these societies. The presence of a massive Palestinian polity, and the robust and well developed character of that nationalism, defines much of the Jordanian monarchial experience. The existence of such a population as the Palestinians did as much to entrench the tribal stacking in the military as it did to destabilize the broader domestic setting. The civil war fought in 1970, and the behavior of the military therein, parallels the experience of such countries as Syria in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Theirs was too a minority, kinship based military leadership against a much larger, politically disenfranchised resistance. Defection was present, though not strong enough to ultimately undo the fighting capacity of these armies and undermine the regime. In both civil wars, the opportunity for the military to change regimes was decidedly present, yet the military was steadfastly behind the regimes. Jordan, as a former colonial state, has a different post-Ottoman history than Saudi Arabia. This history, in theory, would have made it similarly susceptible to the agitation of Nasserism, and indeed the crisis of 1957 betrays something of this vulnerability. There were sympathies with the pan-Arab cause even with the young Hussein himself, though these were ultimately overpowered by the logic of monarchy and regime survival. Arab nationalism was a threat to the manner in which Jordanian political society was constituted, and the insistence on the special privilege of the East Bank elite, then as now, served as a bulwark against the encroachments of a national ideal. The general lack of support for the Free Princes betrays the degree to which Saudi society was uninterested in a nationalist restructuring of society. In many ways their agitation represented the high tide of liberalism and popular sovereignty in the Saudi kingdom.
The Saudi monarchy, crucially and not to be ignored, rests its legitimacy on the pillar of Wahabi Islam. This works its way into the civil-military arrangement, enjoying particular emphasis in the SANG. The Ikhwan were indoctrinated into these beliefs and joined themselves to the alliance of Wahab and Saud which was consummated in the middle of the 18th Century. Their adherence to this ideology could make them a disruptive force in Saudi politics, especially if there prevails a belief that the royal family has in some way betrayed the tenets of Wahabi Islam. Thus far this has not been the case, though the thought of such dissidence was whispered during the 1979 Mosque takeover. The former guardsman responsible harbored just such a sentiment. This being said, the ulema have been largely faithful to this arrangement, offering when asked to legitimize Saud’s deposition, and formalize the political conditions which had already been determined by the balance of the coercive leverage. It is just such leverage which determines the succession.

The role of oil may appear curiously ignored in this work. That Saudi society has been much influenced by this resource, both economically, geopolitically and militarily is not here in dispute. The oil wealth certainly permitted the regime to arm their troops with the latest technology, often to an excessive degree, and further vested the United States in the stability of the country. But oil wealth cannot, ultimately, buy off an idea. As Nasserism was sweeping the region, the reality of oil was not going to prevent a coup. The oil would still be there regardless of who was in charge. And surely any coup-proofed regime worth its salt, regardless of what largess it had available, would allocate as much as possible to allaying the ambitions of the military. While it certainly brought the United States to the immediate aid of the Saudi regime on multiple occasions, we are not here concerned with why the Saudi family was not overrun by its neighbors’ militaries, but rather by its own military.
This being said, it is difficult to definitively say whether the general quiescence of these tribal militaries, both in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and their behavior in particular crises, is a product of the material considerations inherent to the coup-proofing process or owing to the cultural/ideational respect for monarchy itself. Indeed, the explanations are not mutual exclusive and are better styled mutually reinforcing. Monarchy suits this political/military arrangement, just as tribalism suits the ends of a ruling monarchy. Ultimately, a study of civil-military relations is the recognition that armies, as with states themselves, are not unitary actors. The influences on groups are multitudinous, their behavior occasional peculiar and unaccountable. The effort here was to illuminate the center of gravity in the civil-military arrangements of these societies, monarchy itself

**Implications of the Study**

Herein we were concerned with exploring both the lack of opportunism and revolutionary impulse among the soldiery. The Arab Spring demonstrated that mass uprising and its suppression lends to coup-proofed militaries the occasion to alter the status quo. As the last argument of the regimes, they are called upon when protest has overwhelmed all other elements of the security services. The Arab monarchies, however, had not the levels of mobilization seen elsewhere in the region. There have been many explanations given to account for the lack of popular mobilization in the Arab monarchies during the Arab Spring. Most operate from the assumption that democracy is a latent desire for all peoples, that societies if given the opportunity will opt to organize themselves democratically. As such, the lack of mobilization in Saudi Arabia or Jordan is accounted for by actions the regime takes to prevent its manifestation. Never is it believed that the democratic impulse was not forthcoming. The logic of repression, or the bread and circuses model of the rentier states, is understood to be capable of curtailing the
assumed political ambitions of the “people,” that would otherwise be clamoring for democracy. Without casting aspersions on the relative nobility of democratic systems, it is altogether inappropriate to let these normative assumptions guide how we understand such complex societies. It is not the case that the only prerequisite for democracy is that authoritarianism step out of its way. It takes a nation to demand it.

The composition of the military in the states under review suggest a broader resistance to nationalism and the tenets it espouses. The peoples of the Arab monarchies, at least as reflected in their continued participation in a tribal patronage system, have not embraced a nationalist ideal of the “people’s” sovereignty. There is indeed no single “people,” no imagined community which transcends the traditional lines of kinship and sectarianism, to buy a democratic revolution. Laying in the way of this nationalism is monarchy, not as a repressive instrument, but as a way of organizing society. Monarchy that was faced with the task of modernization and state building in societies which had lurked only on the fringes of empire, far from the reforms of the Tanzimat. Nor indeed can their militaries carry these societies into nationhood, as was the case in Egypt. The soldiery, and herein lies the point, are at once vested in and integral to this monarchial system. Thus, the civil-military relations of the Arab monarchies, though they share some similarities, are distinct from the military politics of the authoritarian republics of the Arab world. The lines between the military and the civil are blurred. The military and monarchy grew up alongside each other and with a cultural ethos that set these institutions up as supra-tribal pillars of their nascent states. In Egypt it may be said that the military is a pillar of that society, it enjoys a cultural independence from whatever organizing principle government embraces. The army belongs to the nation. It could lead revolutions and survive them. Monarchial militaries have enjoyed no such cultural independence.
The effort here has been twofold, both to illuminate those societal forces which inform and shape the civil-military relations in the monarchies (namely this lack of nationhood), and then given this context to explain why at points of crisis the military behaved as it did. We have found that the durability of these regimes, and the nature of their relationship to armed elements, is rooted in the *monarchical* state and society they have built. The Hashemite and Saudi dynasties, being set the task of state-building in unsettled and tribal societies, used monarchy itself as the organizing principle of statecraft. It has been demonstrated that these traditionalist dynasties, when faced with the challenge of modernization and state building, were able to position the monarchy at the center of politics through an alliance with major tribal groups. Further, their successful resistance of the forces of Arab nationalist movements secured for them the ability to shape a political ethos peculiar in the modernizing world. In these monarchial societies, politics is not founded upon nationalist philosophies. There is not understood to be a “nation,” broadly, from whom legitimacy is derived and sovereignty bestowed. Instead politics is a matter of direct relationship to the monarchy, and status decided on kinship lines. To this non-national, monarchial, system the military was indelibly tied from the start. The territorial holdings of both Hashemite and Saudi were consolidated through military means, and as the monarchy formed the locus of all politics its continued good favor and patronage was integral to the identity and organizational purpose of the militaries. The military/tribal faithful were set up alongside the monarchy itself as two supra-tribal pillars of their respective societies. This political organization made them both vested in the others existence and continued allegiance to a monarchial system. For Jordan it was the Jordanian Arab Army, and for Saudi Arabia it was the “White Army,” later the Saudi Arabian National Guard.
What these monarchies represent, then, is the success of state-building measures, but the failure of nation-building. The process of state-building wove the monarchy into the political consciousness of the state. The fundamental challenge facing Middle East leaders in the post-Ottoman and post-colonial period was that of state building and identity construction. As the tide of mandate/imperial rule receded, left in its wake were states of artificial and suspect political cohesion. A political philosophy of identity was required to justify the existence of such non-entities as Iraq or Jordan. The monarchies constitute an alternative political philosophy, not national, but personalistic. The distinction here is ideational where, echoing Louis XIV, the king *is* the state. Where rule may seem highly personalistic in the Arab republics, the belief is shared between ruler and people that legitimacy and authority to govern is ultimately derived from the nation, the people. When militaries overthrew the monarchies in the age of Arab nationalism, it was with the Arab people in mind that they plied revolution. The monarchies which persisted, often in tribal and unsettled societies were permitted a wider remit in developing state institutions without the competition of other entrenched interests. These institutions did not permit of nation building as such but were rather engendered in such a way as to place a relationship with the monarchy at the fore of political identity. Paternalism and tribalism were woven into the tapestry of state and military. This is the core principle of ruling monarchial politics. Therein one is defined based on the group through which one does business with the monarchy. In a nation there is a simple dichotomy, where the government is defined by its relationship with the “people,” the imagined community out of which state and society is built. This is not to say that nations have no divided interest groups or indeed disagreements as to who constitutes that nation. Nationalism is a political philosophy of identity and by its nature exclusionary, but there is broad agreement within a nation that that nation itself is the object of
loyalty and the vehicle for government and politics. The subjects of a ruling monarchy are jealous of their relationship to the monarchy as people of a nation are jealous of their identity. The people of a nation are the final constituency, the one to which all institutions of government are ultimately beholden and who may, through their shared identity and purpose, upend government in revolution. In a ruling monarchy such as Saudi Arabia, the constituencies of the monarch do business on an individual level, not collectively. The goal of monarchial politics is not only to reinforce those divisions and interests which are already entrenched (indeed, this is the goal of most authoritarian politics), but further to build a political ethos which features the monarchy as the only appropriate avenue for participation. Paternalism is the logical conclusion of monarchy; it is a cultural and ideational reality. It would take a shift in this political ethos among the soldiery, one which understands themselves as a national institution, for military intervention to meaningful threaten these regimes.
Appendix I
The Ministerial Fiefs in the Saudi Arabia Coercive Establishment

Below is laid out the ministerial appointments in those segments of the Saudi establishment which had at their disposal a coercive instruments. It is worth noting that initially the primary strength of the security establishment was concentrated in Defense, SANG and the Royal Guard. The Ministry of Interior did not begin with nearly the same leverage that it presently enjoys. The Presidency of State Security, created in 2017, represented a consolidation of the counter-terrorism and state intelligence apparatus and its influence on the role of the GIP is as yet unsure.

*Denotes one of the Brothers Sudairi
+Denotes an individual outside the Royal Family

<table>
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<tr>
<th>KING</th>
<th>SAUD BIN ABDUL-АЗИЗ (R. 1953-1964)</th>
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<tr>
<td>CROWN PRINCE</td>
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<td>Musa-id bin Saud (1957-1964) ^absorbed into MoD</td>
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<td>Khalid bin Saud (1957-1963)-Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz (1963-2010)</td>
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### KING

#### FAISAL BIN ABDUL- AZIZ (R. 1964-1975)

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<td>Kamal Adham + (1965-1979)</td>
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### KING

#### KHALID BIN ABDUL- AZIZ (R. 1975-1982)

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<td>Role</td>
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<td><strong>KING</strong></td>
<td>FAHD BIN ABDUL- AZIZ* (R. 1982-2005)</td>
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<td>MINISTER OF INTERIOR</td>
<td>Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz (2012-2017)- Abdul-Aziz bin Saud bin Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz (2017-present)</td>
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<td>General Abdulaziz al-Huwerini (2017-present)</td>
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^Made an official Ministry in 2013
Bibliography


